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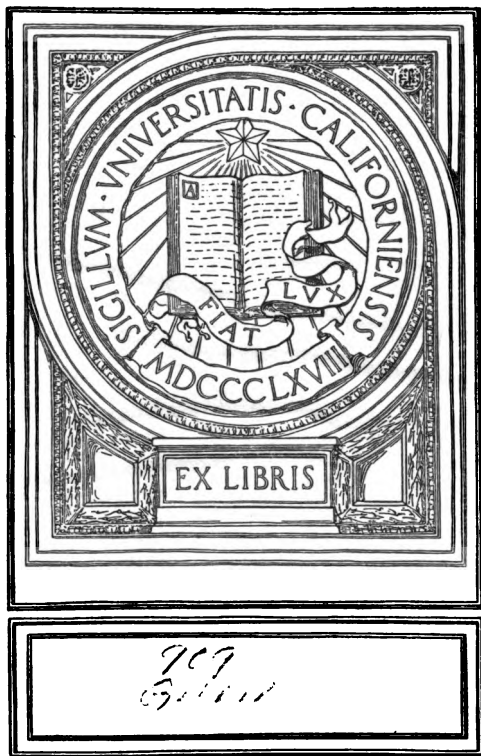
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*The Stage Reminiscences of Mrs. Gilbert*

Anne Hartley Gilbert, Charlotte M. Martin

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**The  
Stage Reminiscences  
of  
Mrs. Gilbert**





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CALIFORNIA



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A 20



*MRS. ANNE HARTLEY GILBERT*

*From a photograph by*

*Sarony*

*New York*

*In the collection of Mrs. Gilbert*

THE  
STAGE REMINISCENCES  
OF  
MRS. GILBERT

EDITED BY

CHARLOTTE M. MARTIN

ILLUSTRATED



NEW YORK  
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS  
MDCCCCI

UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA

TO MY  
ALMOST

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## Introduction

**T**HOSE who have been so fortunate as to know Mrs. Anne Hartley Gilbert well, must have been placed often in the position so familiar to the editor of these pages, of listening to a delightful flow of reminiscence, anecdote, and "good talk." That so much of interest should live only in the memories of her friends has been a real sorrow to many of them, and they have often urged the writing of some sort of autobiography. "But

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## Introduction

why?" she would answer. "I've been so long before the public, that everybody knows all about me. Besides, I am not at all interesting, just by myself. I have always said that actresses and actors, who are good for anything, give the very best of themselves to their audiences when on the stage. The private life doesn't count." Finally came the almost tearful surrender: "I have never done it for anybody, but I will do it for you. I will tell you all I can remember, if you will put it into shape for me." That work has been a labor of love, the only regret being that no pen could express the quick turns of the head, the bright eyes and

## Introduction

flushed cheeks, the merry little laugh, that have emphasized and punctuated every good story that has come up during our hours together.

CHARLOTTE M. MARTIN.



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*Silhouette of Mrs. Gilbert*

*By Mrs. H. C. Bunner*



**The  
Stage Reminiscences  
of  
Mrs. Gilbert**

Univ. of  
California





*Mrs. Gilbert*

*From a tintype in the possession of Mrs. Charlotte M. Martin*



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA

I

**I** WAS born in England, in Rochdale, Lancashire, not far from Manchester. But I couldn't help that, you know. All my professional career, all that I am, really, every inch of me, is American. Why, even my English nephew, when he came to call on me in London, used to stop on the stairs and turn down his trousers. He knew I wouldn't stand such nonsense!

I have a copy of a Rochdale paper, printed when I went back to see the

## The Stage Reminiscences of

old place in September, 1899, telling me things about my family that I had not known, myself, before. It is odd, though, how distinct some things of those early days are in my mind. I can see the church—chapel they would call it, for my people were strict Wesleyans—where they used to take me, three times every Sunday, into the big old pew. There I sat with my grandfather and aunts, though I had much rather have been with the children of the Sunday school. They were very good to me, my aunts, but severe. Once in church, they asked me what I was thinking of, and when I answered, quite honestly: "About my dinner," for I was very hungry, they were immensely shocked. And when we got

## Mrs. Gilbert

home from church, I was put to bed without any dinner, to teach me to think of more serious things. I couldn't have been much over five. I am afraid it only taught me to make more clever and less truthful answers.

My grandfather, James Hartley, was a well-to-do man, a printer and the founder of a house still doing business in Rochdale. My father, Samuel Hartley, was his second son, and grew up in the printing business, married, and had us three children. I was thinking the other day, it's funny that, with all the people who have questioned me about myself and with all the folks who have interviewed me, no one has ever asked me about my mother's family. And

## The Stage Reminiscences of

I owe as much to that strain in my blood as to anything, for on that side I come from the old yeoman stock of England. My mother was a Colborn, and her people were farmers up in the Melton Mowbray district. My uncle Robert, I remember, farmed his own land and leased land as well, owned his hunter and rode to hounds with the rest in that famous hunting country. They were a plain-living, hard-riding, open-air race, and their descendants still have the benefit of it all.

The site of the house where I was born is now covered by the Town Hall of Rochdale; it was then known as "The Wood Estate." There were differences between my father and his father. It may have been on

## Mrs. Gilbert

religious grounds. I was too little to know. Anyway, my father went up to London to seek his fortune, taking my mother and brother, and leaving my sister and me with our grandparents. My sister, who was a little older than I, was sent for by our parents before very long, but it was sometime before I went to London. Once I thought I was going, but found I wasn't. I had been naughty—it happened sometimes, for I was both independent and stubborn—and my youngest aunt said she would have to pack me off to my mother. I was practical and serious-minded, and believed that she meant it, so I went off and began to gather up my belongings. I can see myself, now, coming down with my arms full of

## The Stage Reminiscences of

little petticoats and night-gowns ready to pack, and it always seems to me a pathetic picture.

Some fifteen years ago, when Mr. Daly's company first played in London, we were all out at Sir Henry Irving's—he was plain Henry Irving then—in Hampstead, and Mr. Toole asked me how I came to be so perfectly natural and easy on the stage. I forget what I answered, but in the course of conversation I said, some moments later: "You know I was trained as a dancer." "That explains it," cried Mr. Irving. "Explains what?" somebody asked. "Everything. The ease and naturalness and all." I had never thought the dancing responsible for so much, but I do attribute to that early training my splendid health

## Mrs. Gilbert

and spirits, and my long life. You know the famous dancers, Taglioni and the rest, lived to be eighty and over. I was taught in the Ballet School of Her Majesty's in the Haymarket, the old Her Majesty's Theatre that was pulled down only a few years ago to make room for Mr. Tree's present theatre, and the new Carlton Hotel. We were taught in return for such services as we could give, "going on" in the crowd from our very beginning. There was plenty of use for children on the stage in those days of real ballets. I think I was about twelve when I began. There was some opposition at home, but my mother finally consented, on condition that I neglected none of my home duties. We were



## The Stage Reminiscences of

carefully brought up, and from the first each had some household work to perform. But it was the training at the theatre that I loved.

It was a very serious profession, dancing. Beginners were often kept a whole year "at the bar" alone. But that needs explanation. Our work-room was a big hall, its floor sloped like a stage, and at the sides were bars. To these we clung with one hand while we practised our side steps. Some members of the class were always at work in this way. Then, from time to time, the professors and great teachers, like Paul Taglioni, came in, and we children would go into the centre of the room and do our steps, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups. This exercise

## Mrs. Gilbert

over, there was no sitting down to rest ; we were expected to go back to our practising. This practising began with our waking ; we were taught to cling to our bed-posts the first thing after getting out of bed, and practice side steps, while all our limbs were soft and warm with sleep. So it went on all day, and we were never in first-rate condition, and ready to do our best as dancers, until we were dead tired! Every motion, every step had its name. It was like a drill, done to slow music; the master would call out certain things, and we did them. Everything was so exact that there was no chance of a mistake. Our costume was simple — long, rather clinging skirts that came down half-way between knee and ankle, and a

**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
fluff of under-skirts. The outstanding gauze skirt of the modern *première* was unknown, and we would not have stood, for a moment, the various forms of undress of to-day. The dancing costume of my day was more discreet than the present ball-dress. Ours was a regular profession, don't you see, and we knew that if a costume seemed unsuitable to us and we refused to wear it, there was no one else to be found who would. I remember in the grand ballet of "The Corsair," the gauze of the Turkish costume offended us, and the manager had to substitute silk.

I danced as child and young woman at Her Majesty's and Drury Lane; they were both royal theatres then, and the pupils of the Ballet

## Mrs. Gilbert

School went from one to the other as they were needed. People took their pleasures seriously then in London. The opera would begin at eight, and after that was finished came the grand ballet, often a long play in itself. It was done wholly in pantomime, and the leading dancers had to be masters of that art. There is no one now like that except Madame Cavalazzi at the Empire Music Hall in London. She has the old power, and can express anything with her fingers, face, and toes.

I never did anything to make myself famous in London in the dancing way, but just worked hard, and moved steadily up through the ranks of the ballet to the "second four," and the "first four," the regular stages toward

## The Stage Reminiscences of

being a first or solo dancer. But I never got so high until after my marriage to Mr. G. H. Gilbert, when I was twenty-five. Then my husband and I did most of our work, and made our little fortune, in the provinces.

Mr. Gilbert's uncle was a famous master of the ballet in London, and he himself was both a capital dancer and a good manager of dancers and dances. We toured through England and Ireland. It was what we used to call "barn-storming;" we call it so now, but the thing itself is changed a good deal. Those were the days of a real pit and gallery; the days of the old story of the fight in the gallery when the audience begged the victor not to "waste" his con-

## Mrs. Gilbert

quered opponent, but to "kill a fiddler with him." They were rough, uproarious days, and perhaps there was more open fighting and drinking than was good to see, but there was real wit, too. I remember once in Dublin we were just going to open our show—we were something like the famous Ravel Brothers, only our work would be serious comedy while theirs was farce—and we went in to see the performance of "Faust," as actors always will go to the play, when not working themselves. Something went wrong with the trap that should have let *Mephistopheles* down to the under-world. He went half-way down, and then stuck; they hitched him up a bit, and he went down better, but stuck again. They

## The Stage Reminiscences of

tried two or three times, and then had to lower the curtain with him sticking head and shoulders above the trap. A voice in the gallery shouted out: "Hurrah, boys, hell's full," and the house roared.

We made a good living and laid by money, and finally began to talk of emigrating, and taking up a farm, and becoming private people. It was a question of either Australia or America, and we decided finally to come to America in 1849. I have always called myself a "forty-niner." It's strange, but only two years ago, in 1899, I said to Mr. Daly: "I wonder if you know how much this year means to me?" He didn't understand, and said so. "Why, in '49 I came to this country, and in '69

## Mrs. Gilbert

I joined your company." I did not dream then that his death was going to make '99 another turning-point in my life.

We chose America, my husband and I, because of some friends of Mr. Gilbert who had "gone out" a year or so before, and taken up land well beyond Milwaukee. They wrote glowing accounts of their settlement, and we took our tiny fortune and went out to join them. Mr. Gilbert liked these people, believed in them, would have given them his last penny. Well, in the end, they got it. And we had to go to work again—but that comes later in my story. In 1849 the world had not yet got over the shock of the loss of the President, the steamer that



## The Stage Reminiscences of

went down in '41, carrying with it Mr. Tyrone Power, the comedian who was such a favorite throughout America. I had an idea that steamers were dangerous, and insisted on coming by sailing vessel. We did, and it took us five weeks. We came alongside Staten Island on the morning of my birthday, October 21st. We struck out at once for our Western settlement, making the last of the journey in a regular prairie-wagon. At one point we just escaped a forest fire. The road was very rough, only a few planks and logs laid down over the marshy places, and the wagon bumped and thumped as the horses were whipped up. We were all frightened, and I did not dare say a word. It was only after we were

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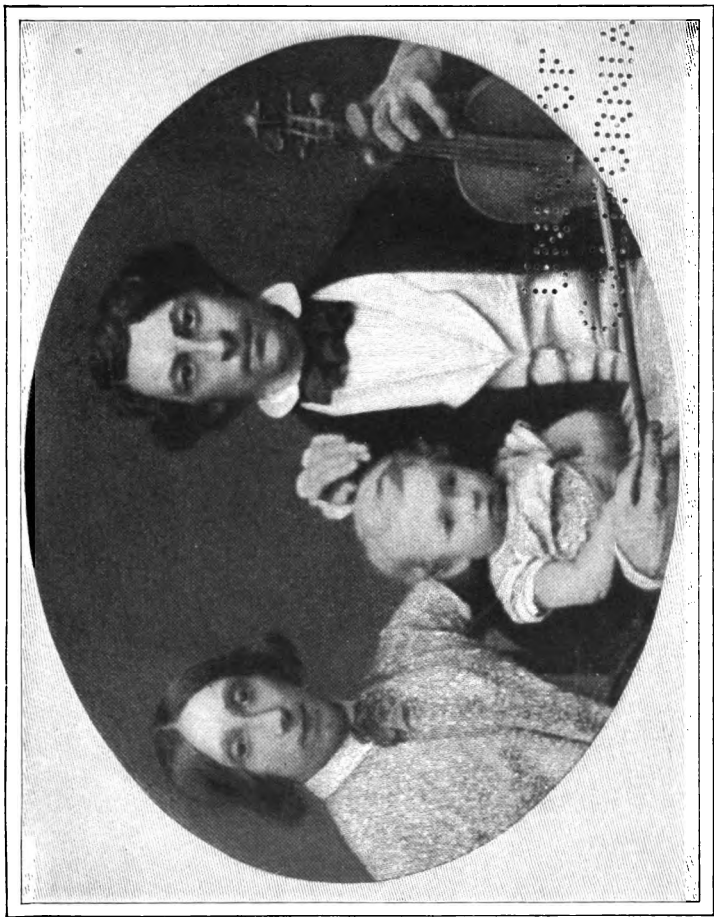
safe that they told me that if we had not made a certain turning, we should have been caught by the fire.

Of course our new home was very different from what we had expected. I cannot even tell where it is to-day, only that it was on the edge of the wilderness, and all beyond us was the then almost unknown "Indian Territory." As I said, we sunk our little savings there, and then went to work. At least Mr. Gilbert did. I was not able to work, for it was not long before our boy was born. We came east to Milwaukee, travelling for the first twenty-five miles in an open ox-cart, the only thing we could get. After that we got a wagon, and reached Milwaukee all right. There we had two little rooms, and

## The Stage Reminiscences of

made a home for ourselves. I always managed to have a home, no matter how small it was. There the boy was born in 1850, and as soon as I was able I, too, went to work.

Mrs. John Drew, in her "Reminiscences," speaks of the very low salaries that she and her mother received when they first came to this country—sixteen dollars a week for the two. Oddly enough, that is exactly what Mr. Gilbert and I got for our services when we began in Milwaukee. Of course, in those days living was much cheaper all over the country, and in a frontier town, as Milwaukee was then, we could be very comfortable on our eight dollars apiece. Everything was most simple. Our rooms were up an outside stair,



*Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert and their son George  
Taken in 1852. From the collection of Mrs. Gilbert*

1852

## Mrs. Gilbert

and at the head of the stair was a sort of little wash-up place. All the houses were light frame affairs, and although we were fairly near to the theatre, and so in the centre of the town, there was no pretence of a sidewalk beyond a narrow plank walk, and cows and pigs were to be met with on equal terms. We got into the way of carrying a lantern when we went back and forth at night, for those who have never tried can have no idea how huge and terrifying a cow can seem when met suddenly in the dark. We had left our interest in the Western settlement in the hands of our friends. We heard afterward that the property became valuable, but we never got a penny from it.

## The Stage Reminiscences of

It must have been in 1851 that we went first to Chicago. The waterways were frozen, and we packed our household things on an open cart, and started out in the dead of winter. The rest of our company went by stage, and had ears, noses and fingers well nipped. We fared better in our open cart, although it meant tearing up our blankets and winding the strips round our legs. Chicago was good to us, and I love the big, noisy place now for the sake of the little town of long ago. John B. Rice was the manager of the only theatre in Chicago, and he used to take his company between that place and Milwaukee, traveling generally by water, unless it happened to be midwinter.

## Mrs. Gilbert

We were working at our old profession all this time, Mr. Gilbert arranging the ballets, training the dancers, and dancing himself, while I danced in the big ballets and "between the acts." An evening's entertainment was different then. People got their money's worth, and no mistake. The programme began with the serious piece, a drama or tragedy, then came a dance, or "dance with song," and then the farce. This was the usual order, but it was varied somewhat to suit the various stars. I know when Collins came—he was Power's successor as favorite Irish comedian in America—there were sometimes three farces in an evening, and I have acted in all of them, and danced in between! For, while still



## The Stage Reminiscences of

dancing between the plays, I had begun to take small parts, appearing first as the fairy in "The Cricket on the Hearth." I was less frightened about it, because I knew that my dancing alone was worth the money my manager paid me, and if I failed in the other thing it was nobody's loss but my own. As it happened, no one lost by it, and later, when Mr. Gilbert hurt himself by falling through a trap in the "Naiad Queen," and I had to do double work for a time, I was thankful for the double resource of acting and dancing. That was only for a time though. Mr. Gilbert never danced again, but he took to being prompter, and then stage-manager. He was a very good manager, too, his wide experience in

## Mrs. Gilbert

getting up ballets standing him in good stead.

We left Chicago and went to Cleveland, then to Cincinnati and Louisville, and back to Cincinnati again. Most of my experience and all of my training was got in those towns. Players used to go from place to place then, engaging themselves often for the season only, but we travelled less than most, for I early took to doing old women's parts, and folks didn't seem to want new faces in old women as they did in other parts. Then the old women had to take the heavy parts sometimes, and I would take anything. Some nights I would have seventeen lines, and other nights as many "lengths." A "length," by the way, was forty-two lines. The old

## The Stage Reminiscences of

term has died out. One never hears it now. I don't know why; I don't know its origin either. It was good all-round training that we got in those days. We had to take the parts given us and do our best with them. I believe, you know, that an actor who is not willing to try everything, and able to do most of it, is not worth his salt. Sometimes, nowadays, I find young people who want to be stars all at once, and to rush on to the high places without waiting for training and experience, refusing the small parts that are steps by the way. So, when the big parts do come—and they come to us all, sooner or later—they are overweighted and overbalanced, and fail. Then they wonder why.

## Mrs. Gilbert

It was in Cincinnati that the little home we always managed to have took the shape of a cosy wooden house not far from the theatre. It was a pretty place, a two-story house set back from the road, behind white palings; white with green blinds, and its narrow front yard paved with bright red bricks. And all this quite in the centre of the town. Mr. Gilbert was ill at this time. It was not long after his accident, and he spent a good many of his days at the place of a friend outside the town, trying to get well. Our house got speckled and grimy with rain as time went on, although it had been painted so recently that the landlord, who lived next door, would not do anything to it, and only laughed at me when I

## The Stage Reminiscences of

fretted over it. I loved everything to be spotlessly clean, and got into the way of standing across the road with my boy, and studying the house as it grew more and more shabby. Finally I said: "I believe we two could wash it." That was one evening, and the next morning we were up long before light and at work with warm water, soap and brushes. We tried the big ladder at first, but that fell down, and once down it was too much for us. So what George could not do with the short ladder, I managed to do by reaching out of the bedroom windows. Then we rinsed it off by dashing pails of water up against it. It was all over before the milkman made his morning rounds. Everybody thought I was crazy, and

## Mrs. Gilbert

when Mr. Gilbert came home—this was done while he was away, of course—he never said a word about the house, but wanted to know why we had not washed the fence! But, oh, dear, I have not thought of all this for years.

In towns like Cincinnati, Chicago and Louisville, they used to keep stock companies in the theatres while the stars traveled from place to place, sometimes alone, sometimes with their leading lady only; and sometimes, as in the case of great men like Edwin Forrest, with their “second man,” who took all the business arrangements off their shoulders, and played next best parts. Most stars came for a week, some for two, and some for only a few days. The

## The Stage Reminiscences of

money arrangements I don't know much about ; the star usually took a percentage of the profits, I believe. But Friday night was always the star's benefit, when he did his strongest piece and took as his share one-half of the gross receipts. They all played "in repertory," in regulation pieces ranging from Shakespeare to the popular farces of the day ; and we knew, when a certain man was coming, pretty much what his plays would be. Still, except for the first night of his engagement, we knew exactly what was coming only from day to day. I was what is known as "a quick study ;" one had to be in those days. It was not as bad as it sounds, though, for the same stars came year after year, and we got to

## Mrs. Gilbert

know their plays. Although each of us seldom had the same part for two years in succession, we had seen them all done. It was very rare to have an entirely unfamiliar play "sprung" on us, but that did happen to me once, and its story comes later. The fact that I always had my eyes open made things easier for me. I got into the way of watching every part going on around me. To this day I find myself still watching, and I often say to myself: "I wonder if I should do that in just that way, if I were acting that part?"

We would get our Monday part on the Saturday, and that gave us all day Sunday for study; but for the rest of the week we would get the Tuesday part on the Monday, have



## The Stage Reminiscences of

perhaps a bit of Monday afternoon, and Monday night after the performance, for study, have a rehearsal on Tuesday morning, play the part on Tuesday night, and then begin work on another part for Wednesday night. A different play every night was the rule. "Runs" were unknown; an entire week of one play was an unusual success, and possible only in big centres. Sometimes, when we were not quite sure of ourselves, we would take our lines along and study them between the acts, or during our waits. Our call would come, and we would tuck the parts just anywhere, usually under the slender wood-work of the wings; we called it "winging the parts." Then, if the scene were shifted, the parts would be whisked

## Mrs. Gilbert

out of sight and reach, and there would be a great flutter and outcry.

We had to supply our own costumes, and we often made the greater part of them. For a long time I made mine altogether. You can fancy how much time we had for sewing, with all the other work. I remember Mr. Gilbert saying so often : "Do you intend to get to bed to-night at all?" Whenever I bought a dress, it was with an eye to some particular part ; but beyond that part lay many another to which the gown could be adapted. We were always on the lookout for things, bits of chintz, laces, and what not. Our only guide was the list of costumes printed in the front of the little books of the play. I always liked to follow

## The Stage Reminiscences of

these lists. I know Mr. Gilbert used to laugh at me and say that, if the directions said I was to black the soles of my boots for a certain part, I would do it. And so I would! Perhaps I would not go quite as far as that, but you may depend upon it that if a thing is printed in the directions it has some reason for being there, and may mean something to the author or audience that we on the stage cannot see. I have always found it safer to follow directions exactly.

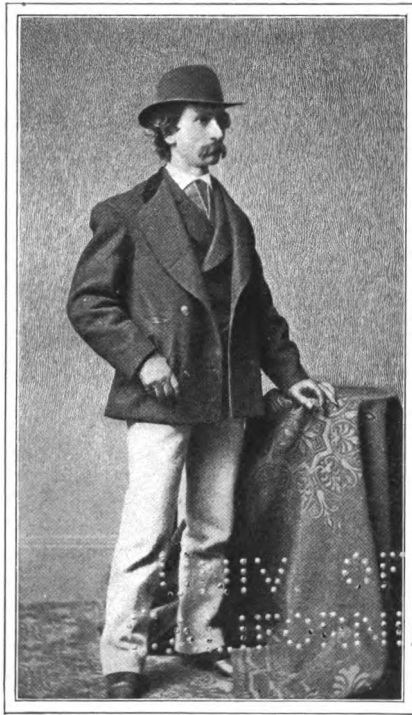
In the matter of "make-up," we used only powder and rouge in those days, and very little of them, only just enough to prevent our faces taking a ghastly pallor from the unnatural glare of the footlights. To this

### Mrs. Gilbert

day, much painting of the face distresses me ; and the excessive blackening of the eyes, and the little red spot in the corners, affect me most unpleasantly. It looks as if the actor had hurt himself badly. They tell me I never look quite the same in any two parts, but except for this care about detail in costume, which has clung to me always, I do very little to make myself different. Painted age and painted wrinkles never look natural, and I avoided them as much as possible, even when I needed them. I really don't know just *what* I do ; I suppose the constant thinking myself into a part ends in giving me an expression that belongs only to the character I am just then personating. I used to have, at home, a big trunk

**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
that I called my theatre-trunk, and the things I needed for each night were sent down to the theatre, that same day, in a sort of champagne basket. Of course we had to be ingenious, and make things do ; I can even remember playing a character in one costume through every act, and for the best of reasons.

The better part of our Western experience was under the management of either Lewis Baker or John Ellsler. Ellsler had been an actor himself in the East, and knew many of the famous actors of that day ; so, when he came to be a manager in Cleveland and Cincinnati, most of the stars who came to him were his personal friends. William E. Burton was, I know. Mrs. Farren and



*John Ellsler*

*From a photograph by J. F. Ryder, Cleveland,  
O. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

TO THE  
ABBOT

## Mrs. Gilbert

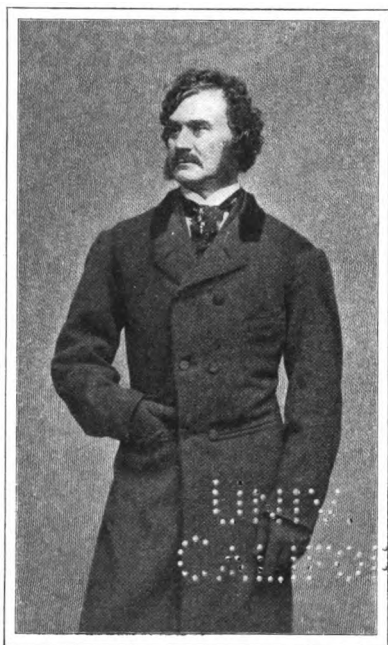
Wallack—J. W. Wallack, a cousin of Lester, and a capital actor himself—had been playing for a week at Mr. Ellsler's theatre, when Burton came, and it was thought best to keep them on to play in his support, during the three days of his stay. I had never seen Burton before, nor did I ever see him after, but in those three days he played *Aminadab Sleek* in "The Serious Family;" *Toodles, Jem Baggs*—the "Wandering Minstrel," who won't move on under a shilling—and *Tony Lumpkin*, the most wonderful *Lumpkin* I ever saw. He was always excruciatingly funny, but there was no buffoonery about it. There was one place, I remember, where three of us had to stand facing him, our backs to the audience, and



## The Stage Reminiscences of

we were thankful, for it was impossible to keep our faces straight. I have always made a point of keeping my countenance, for a stageful of giggling people upsets an audience. But when I was doing *Lady Creamly* to Mr. Burton's *Sleek* I had to bite my lips until they bled. Besides *Lady Creamly* and *Mrs. Toodles*, I played *Mrs. Hardcastle* in Burton's support. Oh, that *Mrs. Hardcastle!* I had done the others before, but she was new.

On the Saturday before the play was given, I went into the green-room to see the cast for Monday, and to find out what my part was. Mrs. Farren was sitting near. I read the heading, "She Stoops to Conquer;" I ran my eye down the cast



*J. W. Wallack*

*From a photograph by C. D. Fredricks &  
Co. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell,  
Esq.*

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### Mrs. Gilbert

and found I was to be *Mrs. Hardcastle*, an entire stranger to me. "Is she long?" I asked Mrs. Farren. "Long?" she answered, "she is all through it, and you will have your hands full." They said my face fell a yard. I did not know a line of the part, had never seen it acted, and had no idea how to dress it. That was Saturday. Sunday morning I woke up with a blind, bilious headache. By noon I was able to take a cup of tea and begin to study. All the afternoon, I spent out in the garden learning my lines, and later my husband found me walking up and down our room in the dark. "What are you doing?" he asked me. "Studying my part," I answered, and so I was.

## The Stage Reminiscences of

Fortunately, Mrs. Mann, who had been doing old women's parts in Mr. Ellsler's theatre, a year or two before, had just returned from a tour in the South with her daughter, Alice Placide, and was boarding opposite us. She was just the one, I thought, to tell me about *Mrs. Hardcastle's* costume, so I ran across to ask. She gave me the pattern for the necessary cap, and I turned out an old chintz gown from my theatre-trunk. So, by rehearsal on the Monday morning, I was fairly ready. I asked Mr. Burton about the business of the part. I used to make a point of asking the stars about the business that played up to them. It was really the most important part of it all to them. They did not so much



*W. E. Burton*

*From a photograph by Rockwood, New York. In  
the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

70 VINU  
ABROGATA

## Mrs. Gilbert

mind how the supports did their parts as parts. What they wanted was to get their own cues properly given, and to find people on their left when they wanted them there, and not wandering about on their right or at the back of the stage.

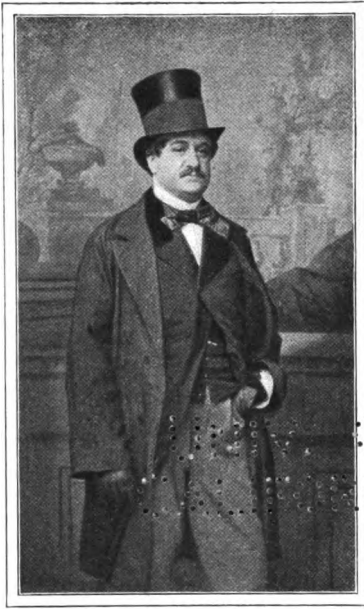
Mr. Burton was charming and helpful, and kind, very kind to me. He taught me a few little things to do as *Mrs. Hardcastle*, and also told me the exit that Mrs. Hughes always used in the "swamp scene." She was the leading old woman in his New York theatre, and a clever actress. It was not much in particular, that exit, just a trick of picking up her skirts and running off, but I was glad to use it, and it pleased the audience. At rehearsal, Mr. Burton



## The Stage Reminiscences of

said : " Be sure and don't forget the line you are to say as you are going off the stage." I was to call "Constance," and so give the man on the scene a chance to say something about constancy. " Oh, dear," I said, " why did you tell me? I shall be sure to forget it." And I did. Or, rather, I put it off so late, that when I finally yelled " Constance," it broke them all up, and the man with the " gag " about constancy could not be heard. Mr. Burton wanted me to go to New York with him and play second to Mrs. Hughes. It was a great compliment, but some years were to pass before I got to New York.

My first real hit was in John Brougham's " Pocahontas." I played



*John Brougham*

*From a photograph by C. D. Fredricks & Co.,  
taken in 1861. In the collection of Evert Jansen  
Wendell, Esq.*

TO THE  
LIBRARY

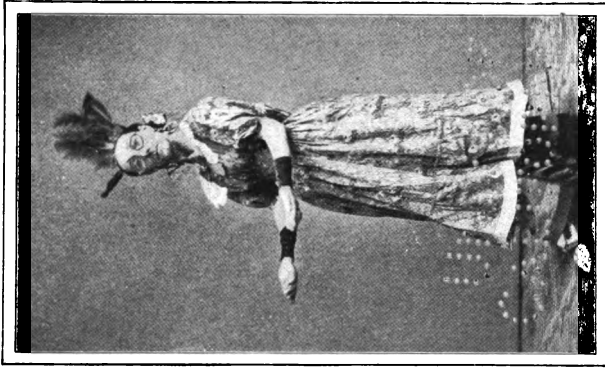
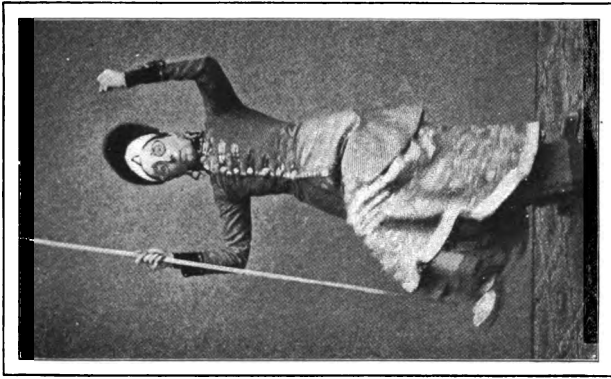
## Mrs. Gilbert

in it with him often in the West, but only once in New York, when Mr. Daly gave a benefit to him on May 13, 1876, at the second Fifth Avenue Theatre. On that particular afternoon we did "The Serious Family," with Maurice Barrymore, Georgie and John Drew in the cast, and "Pocahontas," with John Brougham in his old part of *Powhatan*. Was he as delightful as he seemed? Yes, indeed, and ever so much more so. The embodiment of wit and fun, of endless resource and good-humor. Everybody knows the story of the night in New York, while the burlesque was still new, when his *Pocahontas*, Henrietta Hodson, failed to appear, and he carried on the play, giving her lines in his own character

## The Stage Reminiscences of

of *Powhatan*, with a prefatory "as my daughter Poky would say;" and so getting through the performance until it became absolutely necessary to bestow something upon *John Rolfe*, for his bride, when he seized a broom from the wings and placed it in the bridegroom's arms with a "take her, my dear fellow."

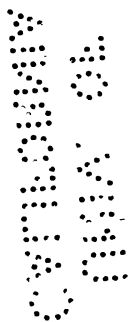
In those old Western days we had a *Pocahontas*, to be sure, but we were short of other people, so I took the *Wee-cha-ven-da*, the *Tuscarora Schoolmarm*, and the *Dromajah*; they were 'short parts, and were easily arranged so that one person could handle them. The little dance of the *Dromajah*, which became quite a feature of the *rôle*, was pure chance in the beginning, as those things often are. I



*Mrs. Gilbert*

*as the Tuscarora School-marm and the Dromajab in "Pocahontas."*

*From photographs by E. & H. T. Anthony & Co., New York. In the collection of Mrs. Gilbert.*



### Mrs. Gilbert

had given a little skip of high spirits on my exit from that scene, and people were amused by it, so that I had to repeat it. Finally, my husband worked up quite a dance for me, and it always got applause. Years after, when I was in Mrs. John Wood's company in New York, we went over to Brooklyn to do "Pocahontas" for some special occasion. They were all surprised at my making so much of these small parts. The whole thing was a success in Brooklyn; the critics said that it was the best rendering of the play since Brougham had done it, and Mrs. John Wood thought it worth her while to put it on at her New York house, where it had a run, she doing *Pocahontas* to the *Powhatan* of William Davidge.



## The Stage Reminiscences of

When I was young, making a hit did not mean what it seems to mean now. There was no devoting yourself to one part, or even one line of parts, just because you happened to be good in it and the audience liked it. A hit meant only that you had put a certain added value to your name, and that managers of stock companies would watch you and remember you. So, although I made a success in a burlesque part, I went on doing old women, and even heavy parts. Why, it was in the year of the *Tuscarora Schoolmarm* that I did *Lady Macbeth* in Edwin Booth's support. That was in Louisville, Ky. I had seen Booth first as a star in Chicago, on his return from California, where he had been playing with his father.

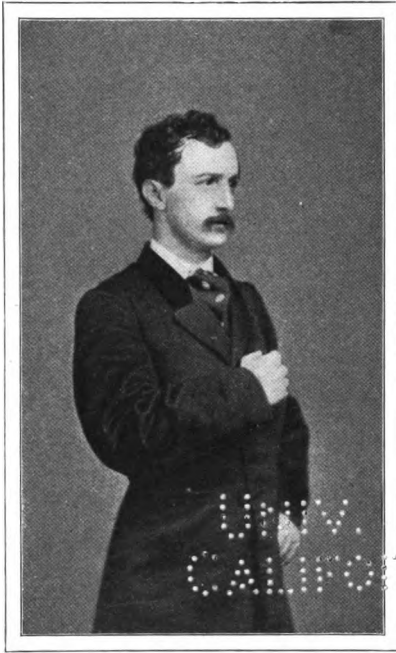
## Mrs. Gilbert

He was always a great actor, and a grand man. Ah, but things were *so* simple then! I can remember his doing *Macbeth* in a cheap "property" crown, and very queer robes. But he was a good *Macbeth*, a charming *Romeo*, strong in every part he undertook.

But the most perfect *Romeo*, the finest I ever saw, was the brother, Wilkes Booth. He was very handsome, most lovable and lovely. He was eccentric in some ways, and he had the family failings, but he also had a simple, direct, and charming nature. The love and sympathy between him and his mother were very close, very strong. No matter how far apart they were, she seemed to know, in some mysterious way, when

## The Stage Reminiscences of

anything was wrong with him. If he were ill, or unfit to play, he would often receive a letter of sympathy, counsel, and warning, written when she could not possibly have received any news of him. He has told me of this, himself. No, I never felt that it was madness that carried him into the plot to assassinate the President. I know from my own limited experience how high feeling could run in those days. A man lived so wholly with people who thought as he did that any one on the other side was hateful to him. Whatever drew Wilkes Booth into the plot, it was not quite dare-deviltry. And if the lot fell to him to do the thing, I feel sure that he went through with it without a backward thought. He had



*J. Wilkes Booth*

*From a photograph by C. D. Fredricks & Co.,  
New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen  
Wendell, Esq.*

70 1000  
ANATOMIA

### Mrs. Gilbert

that kind of loyalty, that kind of courage. Perhaps the devotion of a high-strung Nihilist, who believes in his cause, comes nearest to expressing it. I ought to say that this is just my fancy from having known the man.

My playing *Lady Macbeth* was not so strange as it sounds. Heavy parts, as I have said, were often given to the "old women," and managers could not be blamed for getting double work for "single money." And in those days out there, there was no talk of "that's not my work," or "that is not in my line." When Edwin Booth came to Louisville, our leading lady was a little woman. She knew she could not fill the part, and very sensibly did not try. So it fell to me. It was not such a great un-

## The Stage Reminiscences of

dertaking, for, in my years of training I had filled many of the characters in the play, and had lived the rest, for my eyes and ears seemed to take in everything. Beginners in *Macbeth* were sent on as attendant witches, and there I made my start. Then I had been the boy *Donalbain*, and a guest at the banquet, and the gentlewoman who attends the queen. I had even done all the apparitions, one after the other. And that's no laughing matter! To be several ghosts in rapid succession, and give an individual expression and voice to each, takes thought and study, I can tell you. So doing *Lady Macbeth* herself was only moving a little higher in scenes already familiar to me, and I got on pretty well.

## Mrs. Gilbert

We were in Louisville when the war broke out. People who lived in the Northern towns can have no idea how exciting our lives were down there. Kentucky was "Secesh" in her sympathies, and naturally so for many reasons. It used to be said that it was the editor of the *Louisville Journal* who kept the State in the Union by his work and his influence. Anyway, she stayed in, but there was bitter feeling everywhere, separating friends and families. Union flags and Confederate flags were run up on private houses, and there was a good deal of quarrelling and free shooting. Across the way from our theatre was a hotel with the usual bar, and it was the scene of many party fights. It got so that no one minded; they



## The Stage Reminiscences of

simply said: "Another man shot," and went about their business. In those times of hot words and quick firing there was no time to draw pistols, and they shot through their pockets. Mr. Gilbert had a little property there then. The man who looked after it was shot and killed one day. There was no need to ask what the quarrel was about.

We went from Louisville to Covington, and then to Cincinnati, just across the river. But we were almost as much on the border as ever. Mr. Gilbert joined a company of volunteers called "The Queen City Defenders," that was to guard the town and the pontoon bridge, but was never meant to go to the front. They were called out at any alarm, and

## Mrs. Gilbert

sometimes there would be a wild ringing of bells, if there was any danger of a raid. I remember once there was a great disturbance and fright at night ; but it was only a small band of young fellows, riding in to join the Union forces, on their own horses, and with no weapons but little guns, such as they would use for bird-shooting, and a pistol or two.

But we were always having alarms. First it would be the rumor of a Southern raid ; then of a large Northern force passing through, when we would all turn out and feed them. In any case of that sort, martial law would be declared and every one would have to be indoors by nine at night. At such times there was no performance, of course ; but at other

## The Stage Reminiscences of

times our theatre would be full, for in such a whirl of excitement people liked to be constantly amused. At a benefit we had in Louisville, one of the town soldiers, who had just returned from the front, recited "Bingen on the Rhine," and was most enthusiastically received. He was one of Louisville's special regiment that had just come home from its three years of service. It had gone out full, it came back hardly fifty men, and those bare-footed and in rags. Yet they could not wait for decent clothes before they re-enlisted.

Even when there was no martial law, the stores and markets were closed at ten in the morning, for all the men had to drill so as to be able to defend the town, if need be. No

## Mrs. Gilbert

one was spared, and it was not safe to be out without some sort of a certificate showing membership of some special company, for the local bands had a way of impressing unattached men, and listening to no protests. Once I know there was an alarm, and it was before Mr. Gilbert had either his certificate or his uniform. He snatched up a stage sword and rushed out of the house, only to be scooped up by a company of city volunteers. He was too clever to struggle with them, and too shrewd to march in the middle of their ranks, as they tried to make him do. He kept on the outside, and got the men friendly and laughing with his chaff and funny stories. He was counting on a stable he had to pass, a place he knew and

## The Stage Reminiscences of

where he was known. When he got opposite he watched his chance, and scooted through and got well away. When he was safe home, he told me that that was the last time they should find him out without protection.

They were stirring times, and hard times too, for our salaries were cut down, and all the necessaries of life went up. But it was not all so serious. For instance, our prompter at that time was a very fat man, not tall, and broad out of all proportion. He was as clean as he was fat—spotlessly, unnecessarily clean. One day he had come to the theatre in especial rig; it was midsummer, and he had on white duck trousers and a fine ruffled shirt with no coat or waistcoat. We were

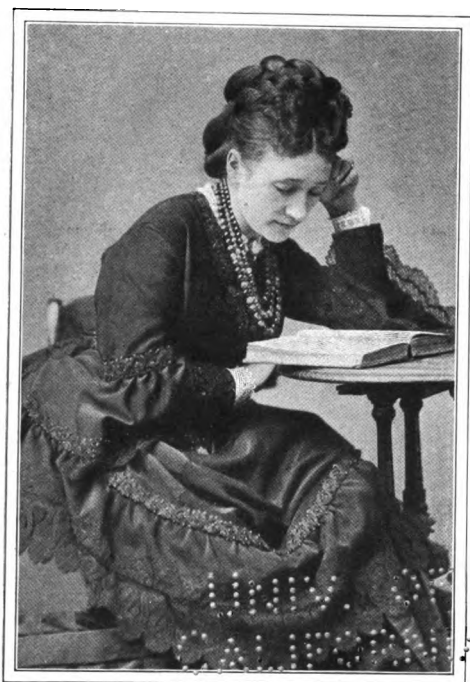
## Mrs. Gilbert

having a rehearsal when there came a sudden call to all the men in the town to help in some earthworks that were to be thrown up. Our prompter went with the rest, and oh, the sight he was at the end of a day's work under a broiling sun! There was not a clean white thing about him.

With all the anxiety and excitement we were not sorry to get away in 1864. I was rather proud, for that season I received five good offers to come East from different managers. One was from Mrs. John Drew in Philadelphia, with whom I had acted in Chicago, when she was Mrs. Mossop; and one was from Mrs. John Wood in New York. I forget where the other three were, but I

## The Stage Reminiscences of

know there were five in all. We accepted Mrs. John Wood's. She had the Olympic, Laura Keene's old theatre—its site now covered by the business blocks numbered 622 and 624 Broadway—for three years, and during the greater part of her management I played with her. It was curious; Mr. Gilbert had always disliked the idea of going to New York, but this time he seemed to favor it, even urged it. "It will be that much nearer home," he said, thinking of England. In two short years he had died here. He lies in Greenwood, and our son George is there too. Another little boy is buried in Cincinnati. I have often thought that I would bring him to Greenwood, to be with his father and



*Mrs. John Wood*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Mrs. Gilbert.*



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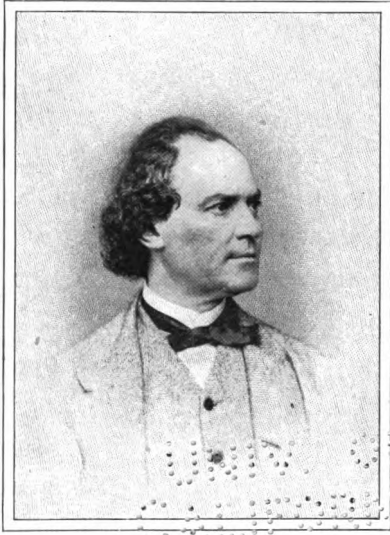
## Mrs. Gilbert

brother, but he lies in a beautiful spot, and I visit it whenever I go West. It is better as it is, I think.

If I had known in those early days how strong—and how narrow—the New York theatrical clique was, I think I should never have dared face it. But I had not the faintest notion of it, and I got over all the “high fences” before I knew they existed. Wallack’s was everything then. To get into his company was well-nigh impossible, and to be out of it was to be nowhere, to many people’s thinking. Fanny Morant, who was at Wallack’s then, but joined Mr. Daly’s company later, said to me once: “Where did you come from? Where did you learn to act?” I rather enjoyed answering: “Oh, out West.”

## The Stage Reminiscences of

“Well,” she said, “we had never heard of you, we did not know what you could do, or who you were, and you walked straight into the affections of New York, before we knew what had happened.” All this is not worth quoting, really, except that it shows that they thought nothing could exist outside of New York. John E. Owens—with whom I got my training in old comedy parts—had been anxious that I should begin my Eastern work in some town like Boston, where the prejudice against outsiders, and especially Westerners, was not so strong. “You will work your way to the front in New York,” he said; “there is no fear about that, but it may take many months, or a year and more. In Boston a few perform-



*John E. Owens*

*From a photograph by Gurney, New York. In  
the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

TO VISHU  
AMBODIAD

## Mrs. Gilbert

ances will do it." He was always a good friend of ours, and I know now that his advice was good, too. But, as it happened, it did not apply to my case, and, as I said, Mr. Gilbert favored New York.

We were hardly settled here when Owens himself came to New York under the management of our old Cincinnati manager, George Wood, of "Wood's Theatre," who had taken the Broadway Theatre, just below the corner of Broome Street, about which I shall have something to say later. He asked me to join his company there, but I would not leave Mrs. John Wood as long as she wanted me. No, there was no relation between the two Woods. Mrs. John Wood is an Englishwoman, although when she

## The Stage Reminiscences of

went back to her own country, after many years here, she had to combat English prejudice against her "Americanisms." She had played in England as a girl, touring the provinces, and appearing in Manchester, where she was somewhat of a favorite. So she was by adoption, as I was by birth, "A Lancashire Lass." Still, before she married John Wood she was doing light soubrette parts, and was not thought to be anything especial. When they came over here, it was John Wood who was the star, but his wife soon came to the front and has stayed there. I think she is the most absolutely funny woman I have ever seen, both on and off the stage. The fun simply bubbled up in her. Then she could sing and dance a bit,

## Mrs. Gilbert

and in the burlesques and farces she did, such as "The Sleeping Beauty" and "The Fair One with the Golden Locks," she was inimitable. There were certain parts of hers that I always loved to watch her in, no matter how often I had seen her do them. She was a great favorite in Boston, where she played for many years before coming to New York. Later, she went back to London, and had her own theatre until quite recently. Only two years ago (1899) she made a hit in "The Great Ruby." Now, she has left the stage for good, she says.

When I signed with her, it was for "first old woman's" parts, and any character they thought not quite good enough or long enough for me was



## The Stage Reminiscences of

given to my second. One day, soon after I began my work at the Olympic, I went into the green-room, and saw that a play called "The Spanish Princess," or some such name, was billed, and the part of the lady's maid was given to my second. I went straight to the stage-manager and said I thought that part belonged to me. "Why, Mrs. Gilbert," he said, "it was such a slight part, that we thought you would not touch it." It *was* a little part, but there was one scene where the maid pretended to be the princess, and did a good deal of "business" with a cloak, that I thought I could make something of, and I did. Mrs. Wood was surprised, and pleased too, and they arranged not to cast a play officially without

# OLYMPIC

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Stage Manager..... J. E. Selwyn

## FIRST NIGHT IN AMERICA

### NEW AND ORIGINAL COMEDY

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# FINESSE

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**HERBERT LYNDEN**

Introducing her productions of well-known  
**OPERATIC ARTISTS,**  
Rehearsed nightly with  
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First appearance of **MRS. G. H. GILBERT,**  
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First appearance of **MISS LOUISA MYERS**

**Monday Evening, Sept. 19th, 1864,**

Will be produced, for the first time in America, a new Comedy entitled

# FINESSE

During the occupation of Sicily by the English in 1811, a dangerous conspiracy against them, in which the Queen of Naples was supposed to have been implicated, was discovered and defeated by singular means. It was a plot to assassinate Napoleon's general by delivering the English general and British Sicily into his hands. The disposition which passed between the treacherous Neapolitans and the French were put into the hands of the English general. Particulars of these letters were forwarded to the conspirators, and the originals detained on suspicion. The plot was abandoned, and the French general's death, agreed to and an aide-de-camp in disguise, to exchange the signed and French side-de-camp, or spy, who played his part with such courage and dexterity, as to deceive the conspirators and furnish the necessary proofs and signatures which enabled the English general to defeat the conspiracy and punish the authors. - *Ed. "The Historical History of England," Vol. VIII, page 595.*

Baron Freitenhorson, inventor of the Elixir of Life and devoted to mysterious sciences..... Mr. J. E. Stoddard  
Dr. Bertrand, a French Knight..... Mr. W. Holston  
Julius D'Artigny, son of Doctor Bertrand, the mock spy..... Mr. E. T. Ringold  
Captain McWilliams, Captain of U. S. M. ship the "Frigate"..... Mr. T. S. Barry  
John Poppleton, an amateur Sailor..... Mr. H. Lamb  
St. Clair, an Adventurer..... Mr. T. J. Hind  
Philippi..... Mr. C. H. Rockwell  
Baroness Freitenhorson, widow of mystery and her husband..... Mrs. G. H. Gilbert  
Laura Brandon, her niece..... Miss H. Courran  
"Bubble," a niece of "Furzeon"..... Her first appearance.  
Her first appearance, in which she will sing "Come in and shut the Door."  
The Tumbrels..... by..... Miss Anna Krupps

The Orchestra, during the evening will play the following entirely New Music, arranged by and under the direction of **THEO. BAKER.**  
Overture - Variety, on no other air..... Theo  
Overture Selection - Les Huguenots..... Wagner

# JENNY LIND

Baron Switzhoff Boory, a Student's servant the "Cook of the College"..... Mr. W. Davidge  
Mr. Lawrence Leatherhump, a Tanner, on a Tour..... Mr. T. J. Hind  
Mr. Grandy Gag, a London Manager in search of a star..... Mr. C. Rockwell  
Mrs. Schermer..... Mr. G. Lamb  
Mrs. Keanster..... Mr. C. Courran  
Mrs. Spittson..... Mr. A. Hind  
Mrs. Mad..... Mr. Fock  
Mrs. Swann..... Mr. S. Brown  
Mrs. Spittner..... Mr. Ode  
Miss Jenny Leatherhump, also Lind..... Mrs. John Wood  
In which she will give her celebrated imitations of well known Operatic Artists.

Programme of Mrs. Gilbert's First Appearance  
at a New York Theatre

From the collection of Douglas Taylor, Esq.

THE NEW  
AMERICAN

## Mrs. Gilbert

first submitting it to me. That was pretty good for a beginner.

I can't begin to remember the parts I did at the Olympic; but I know that I began as the *Baroness*, in "Finesse," on September 19, 1864. It was there, too, that I did *Mrs. Gamp*, in "Martin Chuzzlewit," *Betsy Trotwood*, in "David Copperfield," and *Mrs. Wilfer*, in "Our Mutual Friend." I was the first woman to do *Sairy Gamp*, for it had always been considered a man's part. For me to do it was almost as much of a challenge to custom as for a woman to do *Hamlet*. By the way, although I have never done *Hamlet*, I have done *Osrice*. That, too, was with Edwin Booth. It is a light, silly part for a man, anyway, and fell

## The Stage Reminiscences of

quite naturally to a woman, when the managers were short of people. But that was long before the Olympic days. *Mrs. Gamp* was such a questionable *rôle* for a woman to take that Mrs. John Gilbert, who saw me for the first time in that part, refused to express any opinion of my acting, saying it was unfair to criticise any woman in such a character! Later, in speaking of some other performance of mine, she said: "All I can say, Mrs. Gilbert, is that you did it just as I should have done it myself." The dear lady, she meant it as a great compliment. Her husband? In his line, he was the most finished artist I ever saw. William Warren, the Boston actor, was the nearest to him. They were both exquisite gentlemen



*William Warren*

*From a photograph by Ritz, Boston. In the collection  
of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

TO YOU  
AMBROSIAS

## Mrs. Gilbert

of the old school. It used to seem as if Sheridan wrote his plays just for them.

It was during my engagement with Mrs. Wood that James Lewis came to the Olympic. His first appearance there was on the night of September 18, 1865, in a little farce called "Your Life's in Danger." He, too, was from the West, from Cleveland, where he had been a great favorite. He did not get on in New York at first, for he was very sensitive, and he felt the strong clique that I had not known enough to fear. Then he was unlucky in this; he was at his best, at that period, in the old farces, and these were just going out of vogue here. Toward the end of the season "Robert Macaire" was revived, and



## The Stage Reminiscences of

he did *Jacques Strop*, and although he did it well, the piece did not run long, and he soon went away to Boston. It was four years before he came back to join Daly's company, when it was first formed.

Lewis wanted to do just the parts that he knew he could do, and the sympathy of the audience was absolutely necessary to him; he could not work without it. He was what one calls "difficult," in spite of his naturally sweet nature. Still, if he put a high value upon himself and his work, he proved his right to do so. We played opposite parts for nearly thirty years, and I grew to be very fond of him. When he died so suddenly, I hardly had the heart to take up the old *rôles* again! None of the



*James Lewis*

*From a photograph by Bogardus, New York.  
In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

TO YOU  
ANGELIA

## Mrs. Gilbert

young men who came on in his old parts knew—or could ever know—the numberless details of business that were so familiar to us two.

When Mrs. John Wood gave up the Olympic, and left New York, I rejoined my old manager, George Wood, at the Broadway Theatre. It was New York's second Broadway Theatre, the first one, so famous in theatrical annals, which stood on the east side of Broadway, much farther down town, having been burned. This new house was built about where now is the huge building numbered 483 and 485 Broadway, extending back to Mercer Street, where was the stage entrance. The place had had quite a history, beginning in 1850 as Brougham's Lyceum, and passing

## The Stage Reminiscences of

later under the management of the elder Wallack. He kept it until 1861, when he went up to his new theatre on Thirteenth Street and Broadway, now the poor old Star. From that year until 1864, when George Wood took it, the Broadway had half a score of names, and passed through many hands, with a pretty steady lack of success, growing out of many reasons. It was during Mr. Wood's management that the Worrell sisters produced their extravaganza of "Aladdin." The three sisters, Sophie, Jennie and Irene, were great favorites, in their day, and simple, kindly people to work with. I remember that they let me introduce a dance that attracted a good bit of attention ; and yet dancing was their own specialty.



*The Worrell Sisters  
in "La Belle Hélène."*

*From a photograph by Howell, New York. In the  
collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

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## Mrs. Gilbert

One does not have to be in the profession to realize what that means. Of the three sisters, who were the first to give us *opéra bouffe* in English, two are still living, retired from the stage and settled in the west. Jennie died a year or two ago in Minneapolis.

I played for three years at the Broadway, but the last two were under the management of Barney Williams, to whom Mr. Wood transferred the lease of the house ; for although he did fairly well there, he was not sorry to pass it on, and the old place ended its career on the night of April 28, 1869, when Barney Williams gave a benefit performance to his business manager, William A. Moore. Williams had not intended to give up



## The Stage Reminiscences of

the house, and did not believe the owners were in earnest when they threatened to tear down the old building and put up stores on its site if he refused to pay a higher rent. But he found, later, that they did mean it, and he found himself out of a theatre. It was under his management that "Caste" was first brought out here in 1867. William Davidge did old *Eccles*, Mrs. Chanfrau and Mrs. Florence were *Esther* and *Polly*, and Mr. Florence was *George d'Elroy*, while I was the *Marcbioness*. By the way, the modern talk about marriage interfering with an actress's popularity does not seem to apply to those old days. All of us in this cast were married women, and no one valued our work the less. The *Marcbioness*

## Mrs. Gilbert

was the first important character I had created in New York, and she got good notices. I always had real sympathy for the fine old lady, with her long tale from Froissart. It was a pretty play, and had the success it deserved.

I always used to say that I played with Forrest in his last engagement in New York. That was at this same Broadway Theatre. But they tell me that he played a short engagement at Niblo's Garden afterward ; a few nights only, but just enough to spoil the point of my story! However, he played for six weeks at the Broadway in '67, doing all his great parts, though not with his old vigor, for he had been ill, and seemed broken and old. But his very weak-

**The Stage Reminiscences of**

ness added a pathos to his work that it had lacked before, and they say that his *King Lear* was most touching at this time. I did not act with him in that play, and, indeed, they spared me as much as they could, for my husband had just died, and my boy was still very ill. But I was the *Queen* in Mr. Forrest's one performance of "Hamlet" during this engagement, and I admired his rendering. In the earlier days his *Hamlet* was too robust, and it had never been among his great successes. But at the time of which I speak it was quite perfect, to my thinking.

He opened this engagement with "Virginius," and I was cast for *Servia*. As I entered and began my lines at rehearsal, he said, quietly: "That's

### Mrs. Gilbert

right." From him that meant a great deal, for although he did not storm about as much as people say he did, he seldom praised. He wanted intelligence and care from those who supported him, and it was probably stupidity and indifference that caused the rages we have heard so much about. Obstinacy annoyed him beyond everything else. They tell a story of a woman who was to have been the *Emelia* to his *Otello*, and who *would* kneel to the audience, and protest her innocence with her arms in the air in the old-fashioned way, and he could not get her to do it in any other way, or even to look up at him. Now he was a naturalist in his work, one of the first of his profession to step outside the tradi-

## The Stage Reminiscences of

tions, and in this particular case he lost all patience—he could use an oath or two when he was too much tried—and it all ended in his giving the part to someone else. I did *Emelia* at the Broadway, and strained my voice in the *rôle*, and so it came about that they borrowed Madame Ponisi from Wallack to do *Lady Macbeth*. I forget the order in which Forrest gave his plays, but I think I did nothing after the *Emelia*, but before that I had done the *Widow Cade* to his *Jack Cade*, and the *Lady Anne* to his *Richard III*. I had played that *rôle* before with Forrest, in my earlier days. He was then at his best physically, and had the name of having a tremendous temper, but I never saw him angry without cause. He was



*Madame Ponisi*  
as *Lady Macbeth*

*From a photograph by C. D. Fredricks & Co., New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

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## Mrs. Gilbert

very muscular, and could pick a man up and throw him off the stage if he liked. In "Damon and Pythias" he really had to do this, and if the man had been stupid, or had done anything Forrest did not like, he was apt to get a bad tumble. I know it got so that the men did not like to take that part, for it might happen that they would be genuinely pitched off the stage, and they never knew how they would land.

It was once in those earlier days that Mr. Forrest had to have some one to do a sword combat with him, and Mr. Gilbert was selected. My husband was a very slender man, and what with all the stories of Forrest's temper and strength, we were rather nervous. But everything went off



## The Stage Reminiscences of

all right; Mr. Gilbert was graceful and agile, and he knew his business. After the performance Mr. Forrest sent for him to his dressing-room and complimented him. It was a most unusual thing for him to do, everybody told us. Yet to us he was kind, always, and his immense vitality was very helpful to those who worked with him. He was perhaps the most famous person—all told—with whom I ever acted. No, I never acted with Charlotte Cushman, but I met her, and talked with her once in Glasgow. She and her sister Susan, who did *Juliet* to her *Romeo*, and was almost as good an actress as the more famous sister, were playing there.

Charlotte Cushman told me of her own rendering of *Meg Merrilies*, one

### Mrs. Gilbert

of her strongest parts. By the way, she always refused to put on the first part of the play, where *Meg* appears as a young woman, for she maintained that two separate women were needed to show the two stages of *Meg's* life. It was in the earlier stage that Miss Rehan was so charming, when she did the part not so many years ago. But the play was much modified then, and *Meg* was more the Spanish gypsy than the weird Scottish peasant. It was in that production by Mr. Daly that I had my little dance as the *Widow McCandlish*, but in the old days I did *Meg* herself. It was then that I remembered how Charlotte Cushman told me she had been used to chant the song in the part, for she could not sing a note, and did

## The Stage Reminiscences of

not like to have anyone sing for her behind the scenes. After all, that singing behind the scenes is a very false sort of thing to do, and the audience is never deceived.

A certain Englishman, named Bliss, came to star in this country. This was long before my New York days, you understand. Bliss was a famous *Dandie Dinmont*, and I had to support him as *Meg*. I could not sing at all, and I was very ambitious to try Miss Cushman's plan of chanting the lines to the accompaniment of a few low chords from the orchestra. Now I am so made that I cannot take a pitch from an orchestra, or from any single instrument; the only note I can copy is that of the human voice. So I got a girl who had a

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musical ear to coach me on the sly, for I knew that my husband, who was stage-manager then, would not like the idea of my challenging comparison with Charlotte Cushman. But I was forever trying to do the things that were almost beyond my reach, and I suppose it is that which has kept me going. It was not until rehearsal that my husband suspected what I had been plotting. I can see his face now, as he stood on one side, superintending things ; when the orchestra slowed down for me and he realized what was coming, he turned on his heel and went straight off out of sight. I heard him say under his breath : " My God, she's going to try it ! " I suppose my nervousness added the needed quaver to my voice,

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for it certainly sounded like that of a very old woman. When I was finished the fiddlers in the orchestra beat softly on the backs of their instruments with their bows—that is their form of applause—and as for me, I went back up the stage, and had a good cry.



*Mrs. Gilbert*

*Taken in 1865, when Mrs. Gilbert was with Mrs. John Wood. From a photograph by Brady, Washington, D. C. In the collection of Mrs. Gilbert.*

TO THE  
ABORIGINALS

## II

**I**T was in 1869 that Mr. Daly opened his first Fifth Avenue Theatre, in Twenty-fourth Street, where now is the Madison Square Theatre. It was in this theatre that Mr. Daly first showed New York what he could do as a manager. The little hall that had stood there next the Fifth Avenue Hotel had been turned into a theatre by "Jim" Fisk, and taken by John Brougham for his second Lyceum. Brougham was no business man, and Fisk was.



## The Stage Reminiscences of

Some difficulty arose, and the delightful old actor walked out of the house, never to return as manager. Mr. Daly stepped into his place to make a success of this second Lyceum, as Wallack had made a success out of the failure of the first Lyceum, down near Broome Street, nearly twenty years before.

Mr. Daly had begun life in this town as a journalist on the staff of the *Courier*. Even then he was trying to write plays, and had to live down the disappointment of having his earliest attempts refused, mislaid in managers' desks, and forgotten altogether. He got his first chance when he adapted "Leah the Forsaken" from a German play, for Miss Bateman, who was starring in this

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country under her father's management. It was Mr. Bateman, by the way, who gave to Henry Irving his first opening in London. "Leah" was a success in this country and in England, where Bateman produced it at the Adelphi Theatre in 1863. The play is still a favorite, though many have forgotten that it was the first of Mr. Daly's adaptations from the German. He also dramatized Charles Reade's "Griffith Gaunt" for Smith and Baker, who had the New York Theatre on Broadway for a time. Lewis Baker had been my manager in Louisville and Cincinnati, and his daughter was to be the present Mrs. John Drew.

As for the New York Theatre, we were all to know it better under Mr.

## The Stage Reminiscences of

Daly's own management in 1873. It was in this theatre, by the way, that "Under the Gaslight," Mr. Daly's first original piece, was brought out. It ran for fifty nights, and was revived within a very short time. It not only stood that revival, but many, many others, and is alive to-day. I have been told that it was for this play of "Under the Gaslight" that Mr. Daly invented the modern spectacular theatre poster. He produced his second original play, "A Flash of Lightning," at the Broadway, while I was still at that theatre. That was the first time I ever saw "The Governor."

After all this early experience, Mr. Daly saw his chance to get the Fifth Avenue Theatre for his own, and it

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proved the beginning of thirty years of all kinds of managerial work. During those years there was hardly an actress or actor of any note who did not, at one time or another, appear under his direction. He did everything, from "handling" big stars to running a stock company and setting up comic operas. The big stars often cost him more than they brought in. Once I know, when he was managing some one very important and very expensive, it so happened that we of the stock company, who were also "on the road," had to pass through the car where Mr. Daly and his star were sitting, to get to our own part of the train, and they made joking pretence of not knowing us, and of our being beneath notice anyway. As I

**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
passed the "Governor" I whispered to him : " You needn't snub us ; we're making more money for you than your star, and you know it." And indeed we were.

For my part, I have never believed in the big-star system of modern days. They absorb so much money with their enormous salaries that it is impossible to support them properly and yet make any money. My first manager, John B. Rice, of Chicago, always refused to have Forrest play in his theatre, although the two men were good friends. He reasoned this way : Forrest drew good money for the week or fortnight of his stay, but he ruined the business of the theatre for weeks after and weeks before his visit. He was so great an actor that

## Mrs. Gilbert

before he came everybody was saving up money to see him ; and after he had gone, it was some time before anyone would pay any money to see an inferior man. Forrest understood the position entirely, and the two men never quarrelled over the fact that each chose to make his fortune in his own way.

It is impossible to say when Mr. Daly began to learn his business, but he was always at it, from the days when he organized his brothers and their playmates into a dramatic company, and gave plays in the smoke-house of his early home in North Carolina, and later in the back-parlor of his mother's house in Virginia. Even then he wrote the plays, gave out the parts, and man-

## The Stage Reminiscences of

aged the whole thing with an iron hand. Mr. Daly never told me a word of all this—he rarely talked about himself anyway—but at our regular New-Year dinners of later years, Judge Daly, his famous brother, often gave us anecdotes of their common childhood. I remember he told us once that Augustin never acted in these boyish plays, but would often rush in among them all and show them how to do things. And often, too, “he would flare up and discharge the lot of us. And we would have to come round to his way of thinking, and eat humble pie, before we could get engaged again,” to quote one of Judge Daly’s stories. In all their games and plays Augustin was undisputed master, and he rode



*William Davidge*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In  
the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*



TO THE  
ASSOCIATION

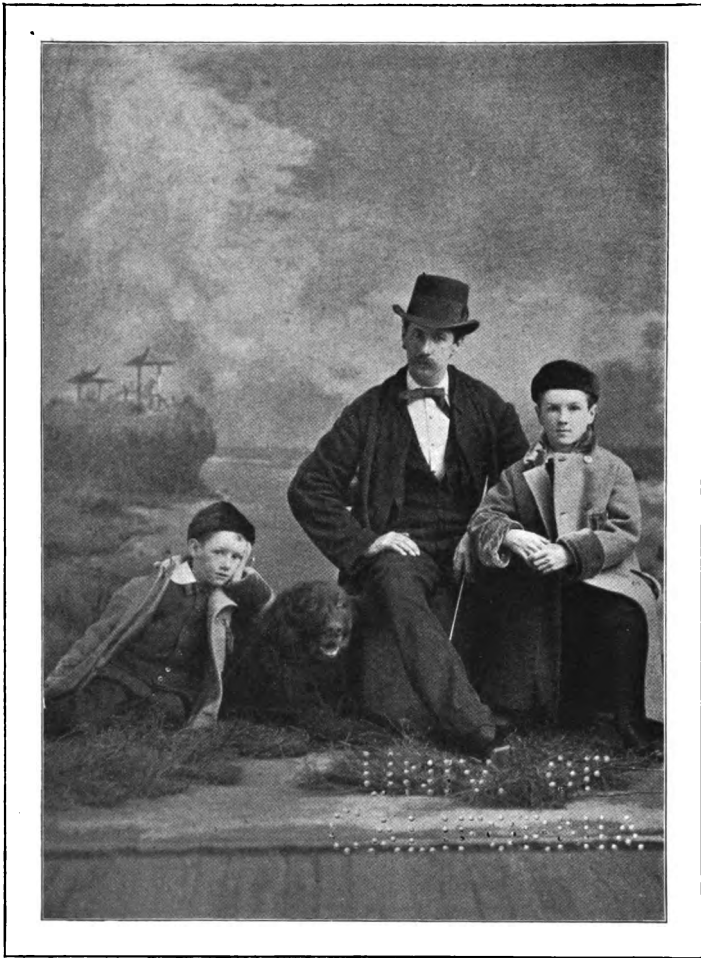
## Mrs. Gilbert

them all, though he was never willing to "be horse" himself.

Yet I have seen him on his hands and knees, making a most obedient horse for his own boys. He was devoted to those two boys, planning their future with more care and thought even than he put into the plays on which all their fortunes depended. One of the children promised to follow in his father's footsteps, for only the Christmas before he died, he had written a little play that was given at home, with their father and mother in the audience. I have often thought that Mr. Daly would have been a very different man if his boys had lived. But they both died on the same day, one in the morning and one at night. It was malignant

**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
diphtheria. They were manly little fellows of perhaps eight and ten, or a little older. That was all a long time ago.

The first Fifth Avenue Theatre opened with a good piece, Tom Robertson's "Play," and a good company, made up of E. L. Davenport, William Davidge, James Lewis, George Clark, Agnes Ethel, Fanny Davenport, Mrs. Chanfrau, and others famous then and now. "Play" was followed by one or two regulation pieces, and by a starring season of Mrs. Scott-Siddons in Shakespeare and old comedies. I believe "Caste" was revived for a time. "Caste" was not so well done with Daly as with Barney Williams; many little niceties that would naturally surround



*The Late Augustin Daly and his Two Boys*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Mrs. Gilbert.*

70 VIND  
ANBODIJA

## Mrs. Gilbert

the *Marchioness* were overlooked. Wallack had bought the rights of the play in this country, but Florence produced his version first at the Broadway. A good deal of litigation grew out of it, and Florence claimed that he had memorized the play, line for line, during the performances he had seen in England. He certainly had all the "business," and if anyone had sold or given him the play "under the rose," the secret was kept wonderfully well. In the end the courts here decided in his favor, for there was no copyright law or anything like it to protect Wallack, and Florence had been the first to produce the piece, and it was well produced. Florence used to say all the other parts were better done than his.

## The Stage Reminiscences of

A remark rather more modest than true.

Mr. Daly followed his revival of "Caste" with "Frou-frou." That was his first important adaptation from the French, and it was followed by many others before he again turned to Germany for his originals. I fancy that he read neither French nor German ; I know that he spoke neither. But he used to have a literal translation made of the play he wished to use, and then he would turn it and twist it about, fitting the parts to the members of his company, and adapt it all to his audience. In "Frou-frou," for instance, the *Baroness de Cambrai*, the part I did, was a young woman in the original, only a few years older than *Frou-frou* herself, but of



*William Florence*

*From a photograph by I. Gurney, New York. In  
the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*



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## Mrs. Gilbert

the world worldly. Mr. Daly brought her up more nearly to my real age, while retaining all the worldliness of the character. And he did it so well and so thoroughly that never a word remained in my lines to give a hint of the younger woman.

After "Frou-frou" came "Man and Wife," based on Wilkie Collins's novel. Mr. Daly had commissioned Mr. Collins to dramatize the book. Now Mr. Daly wanted everything just *when* he wanted it, and would stand no delays, and English people don't work on those lines. At last Mr. Daly got tired of waiting for this particular play, and made one of his own from the book. There was no difficulty with Mr. Collins about it, I believe, for Mr. Daly wrote him

## The Stage Reminiscences of

quite courteously that, if the play ordered did not come to hand at a certain date, he would be obliged to use his own version. And he did. I suppose that, so far as any contract was concerned, Mr. Collins had broken it, and certainly there was no law in those days to protect his book from being used over here ; but when the piece proved to be a success, Mr. Daly sent him a thousand dollars. Just one little point to show how keen Mr. Daly's sense of dramatic value was. *Hester Detbridge*, my part in the play, he made as prominent as he possibly could. Indeed, it became *the* part in the piece, for he saw how much could be done with the weird creature who, in her pretended dumbness, never said a word, yet saw and



*Miss Clara Morris*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In  
the collection of Ewert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

TO YOU  
ABDOLLAH

## Mrs. Gilbert

heard everything, and, in a way, controlled a good deal of the action of the play. Mr. Collins, on the other hand, left *Hester* entirely out of his version.

“Man and Wife” led to a modification of our company. Agnes Ethel had become such a favorite in “Frou-frou” that Mr. Daly was anxious to have her take the part of *Anne Sylvester*, the principal emotional character in this new piece; while Clara Morris, a recent recruit, was put in for the second part—what is known as the “comic relief.” Miss Ethel’s rôle was that of a young girl, deceived by a Scotch marriage, you know. The general attitude of mind toward all that sort of thing was so different then that her friends and advisers pre-

### The Stage Reminiscences of

veiled upon her to refuse the part, even if it meant her final withdrawal from the company. Miss Morris was at once put in Miss Ethel's place, and Fanny Davenport was given the comic part, making certainly a much more complete cast than that originally intended ; for Clara Morris had in her the real stuff of an emotional actress, and Fanny Davenport had in those days a light, pretty touch in a merry part.

Fanny Davenport was with us for several years, and worked her way steadily through what were then the regulation stages from comic chambermaid to leading lady. She was the only one of her father's children who inherited his talent to any great extent, though the others have done



*Miss Agnes Ethel*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In  
the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*



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## Mrs. Gilbert

good work. E. L. Davenport was a wonderfully interesting man, a curiously fine nature, a student and a gentleman. He was a wonderfully versatile actor, too, but that by no means follows as a necessary conclusion.

After "Man and Wife" came a star engagement of Charles Mathews, and then another play founded on a novel of Wilkie Collins, "No Name." In the dramatizing of this the author assisted Mr. Daly, so you see there was no ill feeling over the matter of "Man and Wife." Bronson Howard's rattling comedy, "Saratoga," was the first native piece that Mr. Daly produced, and it held the stage for a good many nights. It crossed the ocean, took an English

### The Stage Reminiscences of

name, "Brighton," won Mr. Howard an English wife, and became a favorite play in Charles Wyndham's *répertoire*.<sup>•</sup> Indeed, it is only a few years since he revived it with distinct success. But we, who knew it first in its youth, like to think of it as it was before any changes were made.

Then came "The Savage and the Maiden," "suggested," as the play-bill said, "by a chapter in 'Nicholas Nickleby,'" and I did *Ninetta Crummles*, the *Infant Phenomenon*, to Lewis's *Savage*. No one needs to be introduced to the elderly infant of the Crummles company, but few of my friends would recognize me, now, in that low-necked white muslin frock, those pantalettes and ankle-ties, with two long plaits of hair down my back. And "Jimmie"

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Lewis as the *Savage!* I lent him an old wig that I had worn long before, in the performance of "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," at the Broadway, a tremendous affair with two long braids, that had been wired so that they stood high above the head, and then bent forward. I remember that as part of that head-dress Mr. Gilbert and I had taken huge pins, as long as the modern hat-pin, covered their heads with tinsel, and stuck them round like a great halo of gems. I lent those to Lewis, too, and he was an object! Then we did the regulation "Nickleby" act—Davidge was a perfect *Crummles*—supplemented by my old dances from "Pocahontas" and some new suggestions from Mr. Daly. I know he wanted us to do

## The Stage Reminiscences of

some funny business with a table. When Lewis was chasing me I was to run under it, while Lewis was to get over it. In showing us how he wanted it done the "Governor" was all over the stage, and seemed to be on the table and under it at the same time. It was thorough-going farce, of a kind that seems to have died out. What makes it pathetically comic to me now was that on one night, when we were playing it, my boy, who was a member of the Seventy-first Regiment, was called out, with his comrades, to put down some sort of riot up Harlem way. And while he was in danger of being shot, or at least hurt, at any moment, there was I jiggling about in a short muslin frock. As soon as I was free I rushed round

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to the armory of the regiment—it was in Sixth Avenue then—but could get no word of him. By the next morning, though, when Fanny Morant came round to comfort me, thinking that the G. H. Gilbert, who had been shot, was my son, I knew that he was safe. That is my last very distinct recollection of the first Fifth Avenue Theatre, though I know Mr. Daly's original play, "Divorce," had a good run there. On the afternoon of January 1, 1873, not long after the matinée audience had dispersed, the little theatre was burned out, and we were homeless.

By that time we were too successful, and too popular, I am glad to say, to be allowed to be idle, and Mr. Daly was not long in finding some

## The Stage Reminiscences of

sort of shelter for us. He took the old New York Theatre on Broadway, the scene of his own first success as a playwright, and, in sixteen days, had it thoroughly overhauled and put in order for us. It had been a Unitarian church, and had passed through many hands and odd fortunes since its congregation had given it up. We used to say, in somewhat disrespectful fun, that we had to dress in among the gravestones. The old place stood on Broadway, opposite Waverley Place, and the "Old London Street" was built on its site. I am not sure but that a part of the walls, still standing there, are the walls of the old theatre, and even, perhaps, of the old church. It was numbered 728, and that number re-



*Mrs. Gilbert*

*From a photograph by H. Rorber, Chicago. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*



TO VINDI  
ALPHONSO

## Mrs. Gilbert

mains there. It clings, also, in the memories of all good New Yorkers as the title of one of the prettiest plays brought out in the present Daly's Theatre. We did that same play in London afterward, under its secondary title, "Casting the Boomerang." The English courts refused to allow Mr. Daly to keep the original title, since it had already been used in England for another version of the same play that had been produced there with small success.

It is only my impression that Mr. Daly got the name for this play from this number, but I guess I am right. He took his names from everywhere, and always had a string of them for plays and characters. We got so that we were all on the lookout for

## The Stage Reminiscences of

them, as we went through the streets, and would often call out: "There's a queer name, Governor!" He found some very funny ones for "Jimmie" Lewis and me. "Dollars and Sense" was one of his best titles, I think. I know when he was trying to find a name for that particular piece he read a whole list of titles to us once at breakfast, and I said: "Oh, I like that one." Then it was spelled "Dollars and Cents," and it was Judge Daly who suggested the change. "Let the old man keep his dollars," he said, "but the old woman has the sense."

We were at the old New York Theatre only from January to June, in 1873. By that time the second Fifth Avenue Theatre, on Broadway

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at the corner of Twenty-eighth Street, had been built, or made over, for Mr. Daly.

Among the stars at the second Fifth Avenue Theatre, we had Edwin Booth in 1875, not long after his attempt to run his own theatre had ended so disastrously. He was warmly greeted, and the New York people did their best to show their admiration and sympathy for him. Everyone knows the history of his later professional years too well for me to retell it here, but present playgoers will be interested to know that when Booth did "Hamlet" under Mr. Daly's management at this period, Maurice Barrymore was the *Laertes* and John Drew the *Guildenstern*. Georgie Drew, John's sister,

## The Stage Reminiscences of

and later Barrymore's wife, was also in the company at this time. Charles Coghlan tried to do "Hamlet" at this same theatre, at one of his benefits. He was our leading man at one time, and a great favorite, but the very manner and finish, that made him such a success in the modern society pieces of our stock-company, worked against him as *Hamlet*, and his was a curiously self-controlled, passionless Prince of Denmark.

Before Booth, Carlotta Leclercq had been the star for one season, appearing in "Pygmalion and Galatea" and "The Palace of Truth," two plays written by W. S. Gilbert for the Kendals. Carlotta Leclercq had been Fechter's leading lady. It is only a few years now since she died in Lon-



*Edwin Booth*

*From a photograph by F. Gutekunst, Philadelphia, Pa. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

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### Mrs. Gilbert

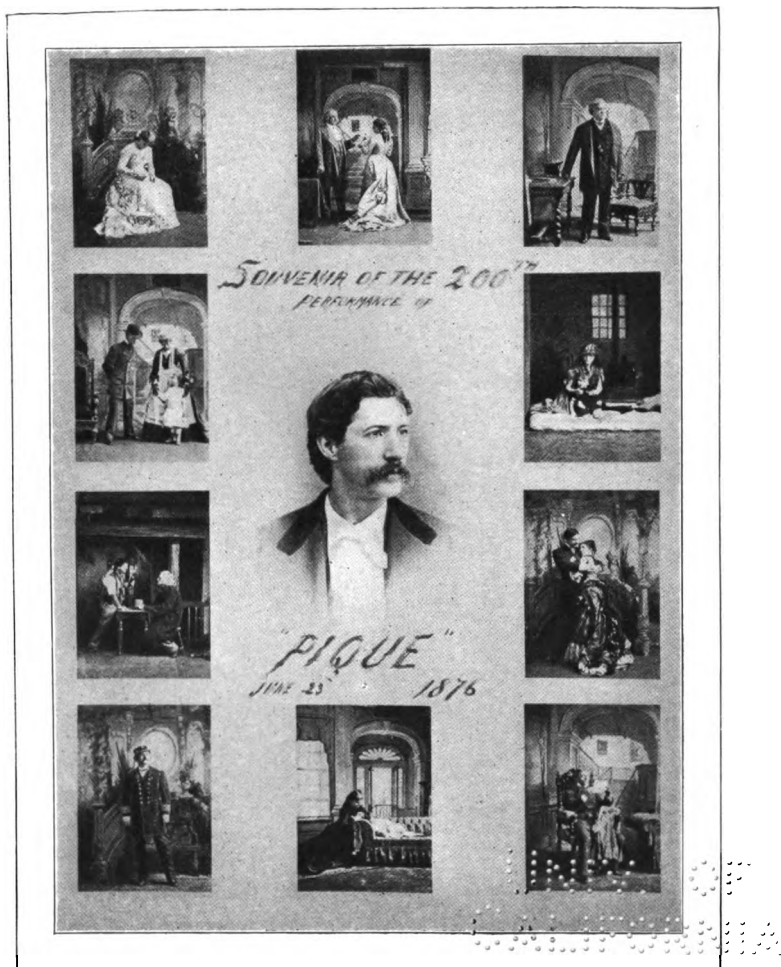
don, but it is a long time since she appeared on any stage, save for one or two short London engagements. The only other famous name among Mr. Daly's stars at this time is that of Adelaide Neilson, who played her regular *répertoire* in the theatre in 1877.

But the real attraction of these years, from '74 to '77, was the stock-company, and it held good names and did capital work. Why, at one time or another we had Fanny Davenport, Sara Jewett, Charles Coghlan, Maurice Barrymore, Georgie and John Drew, and James Lewis. By the time "Pique" was put on in '75 Fanny Davenport was leading lady, and in that particular play we all had strong parts. "Pique" was not an



**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
adaptation, but an entirely original work by Mr. Daly, and it ran two hundred nights, a wonderful run then, and a good run at any time. People forget sometimes that Mr. Daly was a writer of plays, as well as an adapter and manager. He needed the barest outline on which to build a play; something he had seen in a book or read in a newspaper would give him the idea, and he would fill it in, and work it out with parts to suit us all.

It was when "Pique" was nearing the close of its run that trouble began to break out at the second Fifth Avenue Theatre, although it took a year or more to bring it to a head. There is no use in reviewing quarrels at this late date, but I have always felt that



*"Pique" at the Fifth Avenue Theatre*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

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## Mrs. Gilbert

the people "behind" the theatre thought that they could get on just as well without Mr. Daly's management. I know that they treated him badly, and he lost money, and things were very much out of joint for a time. Sides were taken, of course, and the company was broken up. Lewis left, after a battle royal with the "Governor," and only those were retained who were necessary to support Miss Davenport in a starring tour, Barrymore and Drew being the principal ones. There was really no room for me in that work, but Mr. Daly said I was to "go along" until I made some other engagement. At that time there were only two other big stock-companies in New York, the Union Square under Mr. Palmer,

**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
and Wallack's old company. Mr. Daly talked over my going to one or the other quite frankly, but confessed he would prefer my joining Wallack, as Palmer had already succeeded in getting several of his old company away. Indeed, Miss Morant, who had left Daly's some time before and was at this time with Mr. Palmer, got into the way of coming to take me for long drives, when the conversation used generally to turn toward the advantage of being at the Union Square Theatre.

As it happened, I went there finally, but the reason was a purely personal one. My boy was failing steadily by this time, and I felt that travelling about the country would hasten his death, and seized any op-

## Mrs. Gilbert

portunity to get back and be settled in New York. So I, too, left Mr. Daly under a cloud of misunderstanding, for it was during one of his temporary absences that the letter from Mr. Palmer came, and I had no chance to explain to the "Governor" my private reasons for hurrying away in what looked like a heartless fashion. He told me long afterward that it was not until he saw my boy's death in the paper, that he understood what seemed to be my desire to get quit of his own sinking ship. He went abroad after this, and for a time we neither saw him nor heard from him.

In the meanwhile I was doing the *Chanoinesse*, in "A Celebrated Case," at Palmer's Theatre. It was a favorite part of mine, and it was a favorite

## The Stage Reminiscences of

with the public too, but for many reasons I was never really at home at the Union Square, and I shortly re-joined Mr. Lewis, who was playing under Mr. Abbey's management. Agnes Booth was in that company too, and we toured the country. Once, when we were in some little town near New York, we heard that Mr. Daly had returned, had taken the old Olympic—my first New York Theatre—and was to open it with *l'Assommoir*. I do not remember whether it was a version of his own or the English version, "Drink," in which Charles Warner made his big hit. I wanted very much to see Mr. Daly, but was in a quandary about it. If his play were a success, he could not help feeling that we



*Miss Fanny Davenport*

*From a photograph by C. D. Fredricks & Co.,  
New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen  
Wendell, Esq.*



TO THE  
ABORIGINAL

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were willing enough to gather around him as soon as his foot was on the ladder again ; if it were a failure, he might feel that we were triumphing over him a little. I thought it over a good deal, and it all resolved itself into one thing—I simply was sure that I wanted to see the “ Governor ” again, play or no play. So I managed to run up to town and get to the Olympic while he was still rehearsing his piece. As I went in by the box-office I saw him standing well down the corridor. When he saw me he came forward with both hands out and real pleasure in his face. We had a good long talk, and he begged me to run in and see him whenever I could get to New York, for he had many things to say to me. *L'As-*

## The Stage Reminiscences of

*sommoir* was no great success, and the Olympic was given up, and the theatre which, I am glad to say, still bears Mr. Daly's name was built. Mr. Daly wanted me to go back to him, but for the time I was under contract to Mr. Abbey. However, even we of the company could see that things were not going well with our manager, and that a break-up was not far ahead. And before long I was free to sign with Mr. Daly.

I was anxious to have "Jimmie" Lewis back in the company, too, and sounded the "Governor" about it. "Well, bring him in to see me some day," Mr. Daly said; "I fancy we can arrange all that. I got rid of a lot of hard feeling and bad blood in crossing that ocean." So Lewis and

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I came into the orchestra chairs one day when Mr. Daly was superintending a rehearsal. He came over and shook hands, quietly and pleasantly, just as if there had never been any quarrel, and everything was arranged beautifully. And then, oddly enough, Lewis made a great fuss over the very first part that was given him. In "Our First Families" it was. "There," he said, his face all twisted up with half-laughing disgust with himself, "you see how it is. I can't help it. I'm a born kicker, and I shall always be a kicker."

With the opening of the new theatre came the succession of successful plays, adaptations from the German and Shakespearian revivals, that spread over so many years, and took

The Stage Reminiscences of  
us from New York to England,  
Germany, and France and back again.  
John Drew had rejoined the com-  
pany, and Ada Rehan had come to  
Mr. Daly, from Albany I think.  
But it matters very little just where  
she had come from ; what is import-  
ant is that she had had, even at that  
early age, the good, old-fashioned  
training in general work. I know  
that at one time she had been with  
Mrs. John Drew in Philadelphia, and  
anyone who had had that experience  
was the better for it. With such prep-  
aration Miss Rehan was as ready to  
take up the work that fell to her  
under Mr. Daly's management as  
John Drew was to undertake his.  
Mr. Lewis and I were old "play"-  
mates, and so we four—"The Big



A Happy New Year  
to Mrs S. H. Gilbert  
from  
Fanny Davenport  
December 31st 1875

*Miss Fanny Davenport.*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Mrs. Gilbert.*

70 1949  
ANNALS

## Mrs. Gilbert

Four” someone has called us—grew to understand one another thoroughly, and our working together was not only a pleasure to our audiences, but a real delight to us.

The first of the four to go was John Drew, and although his going takes me rather far forward in my story, it had best be told here. No one can blame a man for making his fortune in his own way in this workaday world of ours. Wiseacres and prophets shook their heads and said: “Drew cannot live without Daly, and Daly can get on very well without Drew;” and some said just the opposite. As it proved, both sets of prophets were wrong. Although Mr. Drew was sadly missed in our company, his place was filled, and well



## The Stage Reminiscences of

filled ; and all of us who cared for him have rejoiced in his success and prosperity as a star. But at the time of his leaving we were sorry to have him go, and Mr. Daly was very sore about it, did not like it, and showed that he did not. During Mr. Drew's last year with us his position was none too comfortable, and he needed all his tact to carry him through. We played our regular New York season, then toured the country, and then went abroad. All over this country the word had got about that that was to be Mr. Drew's last season with the company, and of course everybody wanted to see him ; and they did their best to call him before the curtain. But Mr. Daly would never let him take a call alone ; he would

### Mrs. Gilbert

rather have the entire company "out." So it went on, until it came to our last day on this side, a Saturday in San Francisco. For the matinée a play was given in which Miss Rehan had a strong *rôle*, and immediately after that performance she and Mr. Daly took train for New York, leaving us to do some piece in the evening that would do very well without Miss Rehan. The idea was that, by leaving those few hours earlier, they would catch a steamer that would give them a week in London before the rest of the company would arrive. The audience knew that it was John Drew's last night, and the people simply let themselves go in their determination to show him their appreciation. After the play was over the

## The Stage Reminiscences of

usual number of calls was answered by all the principal players together, and then we went to our dressing-rooms. But the applause went on, and it was evident that it was Drew they wanted. The difficulty was to get someone to go on with him, for no one dreamed of disobeying the unspoken rule of the absent "Governor." The leading lady sent word that she was not dressed, and Mr. Dorney, the acting manager, came to me. "What shall I do?" he said. I had my bodice half unbuttoned, but I fastened it up in a hurry. "Where is he?" I asked, "I'll go with him;" and I started out for the stage. Drew was standing there, waiting to take me on. Then it came over me that it was *bis* call, that he had earned it, and

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should have it, whatever happened. So I would not let him take me on, but I took him well into the middle of the stage. Then I patted his arm, looked up and nodded in his face, and left him there to make his acknowledgments alone. He understood, but he never said a word about it. Only, when he passed me in the wings, he stooped and kissed me. "God bless you, Grandma!" he whispered.

I suppose everybody has kept the "stage waiting" at one time or another. I can remember doing it twice. The first time was in the little Fifth Avenue Theatre on Twenty-fourth Street. The Theatre belonged to Jay Gould and "Jim" Fisk, and Mr. Daly was only lessee. In spite of the "Governor's" rules,

## The Stage Reminiscences of

Mr. Fisk would come into the green-room once in a while, and sit there chatting with one or another of us. So we all knew him in a way, and when the news of his murder reached us we were terribly upset. We heard it first just as the play was beginning, and all through the evening we were eager for any scrap of information. I had received my "call" in good time, and was on my way to the stage, when someone said something about Fisk, and I stopped deliberately to listen, forgetting everything else for the moment. I had not the slightest excuse for being late for my entrance, and there was nothing to do but fine me or forgive me. Mr. Daly chose to forgive—although he was usually severe in dealing out



*Mrs. Gilbert*

*From a photograph by Pirou, Paris. In the collection  
of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

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## Mrs. Gilbert

fines—for he thought the circumstances unusual.

The second experience was altogether comic. It happened in Philadelphia, where we were playing "Dollars and Sense" in our opening engagement in this country after our return from a trip abroad. Mr. Daly always made very close connections, and this time we were due to get into New York on Sunday, and play in Philadelphia on Monday night. As it happened, we were late in getting in, and had to anchor off Coney Island all night. What with Sunday celebrations and rockets down there, and the excitement that always comes with getting home, we didn't sleep much! We got up to our dock in the morning, and I had just time to



## The Stage Reminiscences of

run up to my home, get a bit of lunch, and catch the one-o'clock train to Philadelphia. By that time I was rather tired and thoroughly miserable, for I sometimes get the worst of my sea-sickness after I am on shore. However, the first act of the play went all right, and as I did not have to go on until the end of the second act, and had no change to make in my costume, I thought I would rest a bit. I rolled up the shawl I wore in the character for a pillow, took off my bonnet, slipped my most tired foot out of its shoe, and lay down on the floor of my dressing-room. I had no idea, whatever, of going to sleep. The first thing I knew was a great buzzing, then I sat up with a start. My door was full of faces, the

## Mrs. Gilbert

“Governor’s” looming up above them all, and all of them rather frightened. They didn’t know whether I was ill, or had fainted, or what was the matter. “The stage is waiting,” said Mr. Daly. The way I got on my loose shoe and reached for my bonnet soon satisfied them that *I* was all right. My dressing-room was close to the stage, and I rushed on the nearest side, the wrong side, of course. There was poor Lewis making talk to cover my delay, but he had unconsciously become so English that he was saying: “I suppose my wife is quarreling with the cabby over a sixpence.” It was my business to run up to him and throw my arms around his neck. Coming in on the wrong side, of course I seized him

## The Stage Reminiscences of

from behind. He choked in his surprise, and even the audience had to see that that comic effect was unrehearsed and all my fault; but it couldn't see the scene that had taken place in my dressing-room, and that is one I shall never forget. Our playing in Philadelphia at that time had especial point, for we had given our farewell performance there before sailing. I forget the play, but it was something in which I had no part. Still I had to be at the theatre, for it was from there that we were all to start. So I went down in my bonnet and wrap with my travelling bag ready to take the midnight train to New York with the rest. Mr. Daly had asked me to be on hand, and had arranged a little scene that he thought

### Mrs. Gilbert

would prove bright and amusing. When the piece was over the usual calls were received and answered. Finally they got Mr. Daly just by himself, and began to cry, "Speech, speech." Mr. Daly shook his head—a speech was something he rarely made. Then he said: "I have got someone here who can do it much better," and fetched me out, travelling-bag and all. I bowed to the audience, became confused and bewildered, and at last turned to him.

"What shall I say?"

He leaned over and whispered something to me and I repeated it aloud, got more confused, hesitated, and turned to him again. Again he whispered, and I repeated. I have no recollection now of the exact words,

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but I know they ended with a hope that they would not forget us, for we should never forget them. The house liked it, and even Miss Rehan, Mr. Drew, and the rest never dreamed that our tiny comedy was not impromptu. It was like the "Governor" to give me a chance to say good-by to good friends.

It was he who first called me "Grandma." Sometimes when he felt especially friendly he would say "Gran." Sometimes, too, I was "Nan," for he had a great liking for my Christian name. "Come along, Anne Hartley," he would say, or when he was registering at an hotel: "I want Anne Hartley Gilbert written just here, it will look so well!" And of course I would write it.

## The Stage Reminiscences of

One of the last times we were all together in Brooklyn, Mr. Daly took Miss Rehan and me to dinner between the plays on a matinée day. At table I passed him a visiting card and asked him if he had ever heard of that person. It was an old-old-fashioned thing, with a satin surface, its edges so stained and yellow that they looked as if someone had been trying to paint a wreath about them. On it, written as if with a silver point, was "Anne Jane Hartley," and on its back was the address of someone in Conduit Street, London. Why I had kept it all those years, I don't know, but I had found it the very morning of our dinner, when turning over just the few bits of things I had kept from my girlhood, and had put it

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in my purse, as a surprise for the "Governor," knowing that he liked everything that was old, even my old name. And, indeed, he fairly chuckled over it.



*James Lewis and John Drew in "Pique"*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*



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### III

**I** DON'T know what first induced Mr. Daly to take his company to Europe. I dare say that it was a sort of tit-for-tat policy. English companies came to New York, why should not a New York company go to England? Anyway, we went, first to Mr. Toole's little theatre, just off the Strand, later to the Globe, then to the Lyceum, and finally to our own theatre in Leicester Square. It has always been a mystery to me how even the managers

## The Stage Reminiscences of

can tell what will "take" on the other side of the ocean, what will stand the test of transplantation. Indeed, mistakes are constantly being made in these forecasts and reckonings, and English successes are failures in America, and New York plays are wholly misunderstood in London. In his first London venture Mr. Daly had the late Mr. William Terris as his adviser, and doubtless much of his advice was excellent, but it was comically wrong in one particular. Mr. Terris seriously counselled that Miss May Irwin, who was in our company then, should not be taken to England. "Her kind of fun is peculiarly American, and would not be understood over there," was his opinion. Mr. Daly thought differently,

## Mrs. Gilbert

and he carried his point, and also carried Miss Irwin to London, where she made a hit at once, just as she did in France and Germany. Miss Irwin's fun is neither American nor English, but universal. She has the real spirit of comedy in her, something of the rollicking mischief that always lived in Mrs. John Wood. Her silences were as funny as her speeches, and to see her as the respectful, but too-knowing maid, listening to Lewis in his favorite character of humbugging husband, was a treat that foreign audiences appreciated at first sight.

The English audiences were always good to us, though their critics were sometimes severe on our plays, and the country at large gasped at the liberties that Mr. Daly took with

## The Stage Reminiscences of

Shakespeare. It was bad enough that a "foreign," especially an American, company should come to England, and play Shakespeare without saying "by your leave"; but that an American manager should "adapt" Shakespeare, and so render his comic rôles that they were actually funny, was almost beyond belief. I have seen an audience there convulsed with laughter over Catherine Lewis and James Lewis in "Twelfth Night," and then suddenly pull itself together as if ashamed to be caught finding amusement in an English classic!

Our London seasons became a regular and a very pleasant portion of our working year, but our playing in Germany and France was much more for the "name of doing it," although



*James Lewis*

*From an early photograph by H. G. Smith, Boston.  
In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*

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## Mrs. Gilbert

in both countries we were well received on our first visit, and always made welcome on our returns, for return we did, several times. Our first visit to the Continent was rather a daring thing, for it was not so long after the Franco-Prussian war but that hard feeling was everywhere. Then we chose to go to Germany first, and from there to France. I know the French were still so bitter that they would not accept German gold—except when you had nothing else to give them in the way of tips, and then they would not give you any change ! Still, Mr. Daly presented adaptations from the German in Paris, and they were better received there even than they had been in Germany itself.

But the—well, there is really no



## The Stage Reminiscences of

other word for it—the “cheekiest” thing he ever did was to give his version of “*Les Surprises du Divorce*,” which he called “The Lottery of Love,” on our last night in Paris, at the very theatre where it had been originally brought out by a French company, and an uncommonly good company, too. Mr. Daly had modified the play for production in America, many of the changes being made in my part—that of a fussy, interfering mother who is given to marrying her daughter to all the men in the cast, one after the other, and then getting her divorced at once for one reason or another. One of the suitors, an ardent amateur photographer, in his attempt to separate the daughter from her latest husband, flatters the old

## Mrs. Gilbert

lady into posing for a professional picture, in order to compromise her with her latest son-in-law. In the original play, the mother had been a ballet-dancer, and comes in to pose for her portrait in full modern ballet costume. Mrs. John Wood adopted this costume, and the little dance that went with it in the English version she used in London, and of course it was very funny.

But Mr. Daly said he would not dream of asking me to do that, and he hit upon the happy idea of making me a woman's rights crank—that movement was then in full swing—coming on in regulation “bloomers” and a little round hat. Then he introduced an old gentleman who had had us all on his yacht for a cruise, who,

## The Stage Reminiscences of

seeing me in this rig, made some reference to a horn-pipe, that was supposed to start me off in that dance, when John Drew, as the latest son-in-law, rushed in aghast and ran me off at the wings. And we did all this in Paris, for all my poor French dresser was very much troubled to find no ballet costume in my wardrobe, and did not know what to do with the "bloomers." Many of the old French company of the house were buzzing about behind the scenes, full of curiosity and amusement, and the audience was puzzled by the changes in the play ; but the genuine dash and fun of the thing carried the points home to them and the final curtain came down to a good round of applause. For myself, I doubt if I ever did harder work, and

## Mrs. Gilbert

I think we were all glad that that night ended our French engagement. Yet we were pleased with ourselves, and proud of the "Governor," that he had carried his coals to Newcastle in such successful fashion.

We found the German and French audiences very much like the English, after all. A synopsis of the play was always printed on the programmes, just as it would be for a foreign play given in this country, and, except for some minor points, nothing seemed to escape them. As for us, we went on just the same as if we were at home in our New York house. Mr. Daly always carried along his entire company, and every detail of our travelling was thoroughly worked out, from our time-tables

**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
down to the amount of luggage we were allowed apiece. All we had to do was to follow directions, and ask no questions.

To be sure, following directions, even in one's own country, where language and customs help instead of hinder, sometimes involves a good deal of waiting about and not a little anxiety. One week of my professional life stands out very distinctly because of the traveling I had to do. It was Christmas week a few years ago, and I spent the greater part of it chasing back and forth across the state of New York. As it happened, Mr. Daly was giving certain Shakespearian plays in the city, and so part of the company would have been idle if he had not sent them

## Mrs. Gilbert

on a special little tour up the state. I was among those to go, and we were to give one performance in Newburgh, two each in Syracuse and Rochester, and so on. Just before we were to leave, I was at the theatre, and happened to be standing near the "Governor."

"I see you're to give 'The Shrew' for the Wednesday matinée," I said, "and who is to do *Curtis*?"

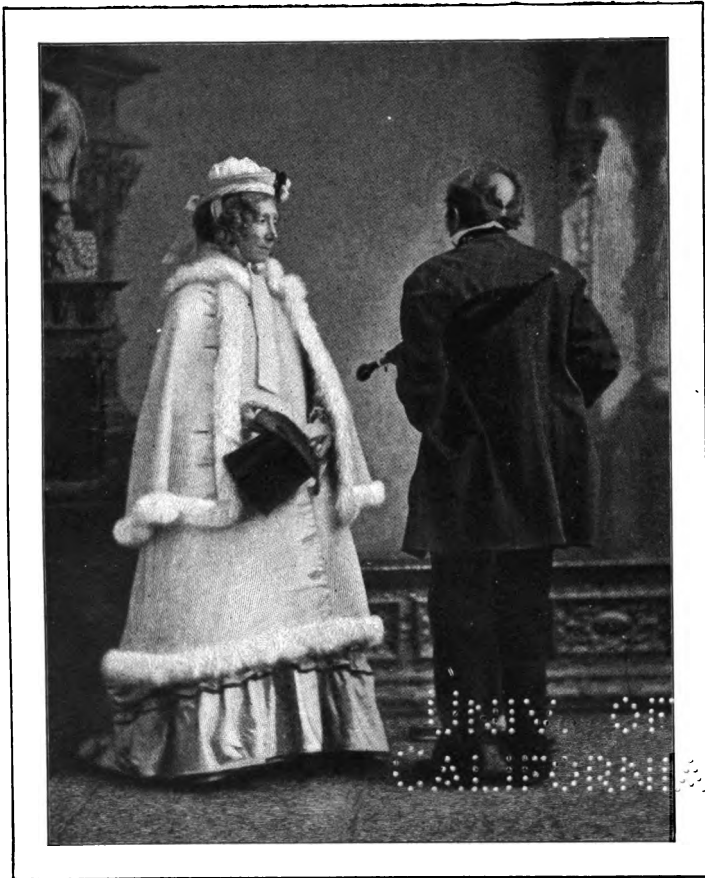
He just looked at me, without a word. I suspect that the possibility of his needing me in New York had not entered his mind, but it wasn't his way to say so, or to say what he was going to do about it, until he had had time to think it all out.

"And Governor," I added, "I shall not be here for New Year's Eve!"

## The Stage Reminiscences of

For years the older members of the company had seen "the Old Year out and the New Year in" together, gathering in the Peg Woffington room that Mr. Daly had fitted up for just that sort of celebration. Now this particular year was to go out on a Friday, and I was to be playing in Rochester in "Number Nine." This disturbed him, and he showed it, but in the hurry of getting us all off he could only say: "We must arrange it somehow."

Well, we played our one night in Newburgh, and got to Syracuse on the Tuesday. Then word came that I was to leave after the play on Tuesday night and so get to New York for the Wednesday afternoon performance of "The Shrew." Now, my



*James Lewis and Mrs. Gilbert in the Comedy of the  
"Big Bonanza"*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen  
Wendell, Esq.*



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## Mrs. Gilbert

understudy, Miss Germon, had not started from New York with us for some reason or other, and the manager of our little branch tour refused to let me go until he was sure of someone to take my place. As a usual thing Mr. Daly sent out a most complete staff of understudies, and took no chances whatever, but this holiday time was an exception. The play was pushed through just a little on this Tuesday night, that I might have time to catch the eleven o'clock train, but still no word came from Miss Germon. The man who had come up from the New York office that day with our salaries could tell us nothing of her. So we all went down to the station, leaving a complete trail behind us over which a tel-

**The Stage Reminiscences of**

ogram or telephone message could be sent in short order. The train came thundering in. It was a through train from somewhere, and still the only decided one in our group was the manager, who would not let me go. As luck would have it, something about the train broke down. They spent nearly an hour patching it up, while we sat around, and just before they were ready to start again, Miss Geron's telegram came and I was free to go to New York. When the curtain went up on "The Shrew" on Wednesday afternoon, I was ready to do *Curtis*, although an all-night journey isn't the best preparation even for a small part.

Before I started for Rochester, where I was to take part in the Thurs-

### Mrs. Gilbert

day night performance of "Number Nine," they gave me the tickets which were to bring me back to New York in time for the New Year's Eve gathering. It was all arranged ; I was to leave Rochester at eight in the morning, and get into town at eight at night, but unfortunately my tickets were by the "West Shore," a line the "Governor" rarely used, for it meant getting into New York by way of a ferry, with endless possibilities of delay. On this particular Friday heavy storms along the line made the train so late that we did not leave Rochester until eleven. All day long we crawled down the state, and I grew more and more nervous. Leaving at eleven in the morning meant getting in at eleven at night even with ordi-

## The Stage Reminiscences of

nary speed, and we were making no speed at all. There were very few people in the Pullman, and one kindly couple became greatly interested in my plight. The gentleman even got into the way of going out and stirring up the engineer at every town we stopped. Finally, he must have won the engineer over to our side, for the message came back : " Tell the lady not to worry; I'll get her there in time."

Still it was long after eleven when we reached the New York side of the river, and we were 'way down town. It was New Year's Eve, too, and the crowd was beyond description. My friends of the train stuck to me manfully, and we all hung on to the back platform of something that took us to

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the elevated railroad station. When I got to the theatre, William Winter's son was standing in the door watching for me. "You're in time," he called to me as I rushed past. A little farther on my way up-stairs I ran across the faithful negro woman who took such good care of us all, who is now with Miss Rehan. "Oh, Lizzie!" I cried, and she managed to get off my bonnet almost without stopping me.

As I burst into the Peg Woffington room they were all standing about the table—Mr. and Mrs. Daly, the Judge, Miss Rehan and the rest, with their watches in their hands.

"God save all here!" I managed to gasp, before I kissed the "Governor" and dropped into the waiting

**The Stage Reminiscences of**  
chair at his side. They devoted some  
of the egg-nog to reviving me before  
drinking to the New Year.

To return to our foreign experi-  
ences:

Of course, when in France or Ger-  
many, Mr. Daly had to have some-  
one to interpret between him and the  
scene-shifters and other workmen  
about the theatre, but, except for that,  
we went on exactly as if we were on  
Broadway. And by this time the  
management of the company had been  
reduced to a very complete routine.  
If there is any one word that can ex-  
press Mr. Daly's system, it is Watch-  
fulness. The French saying that, to  
insure success, "the eye of the mas-  
ter" should be everywhere, could be  
applied to him. From whatever



*Mrs. Gilbert and James Lewis in "7-20-28"*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*



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## Mrs. Gilbert

source he got his play, whether it were one of his own, one of his adaptations, Shakespearian or otherwise, or an original work of some other man, the first thing Mr. Daly did was to read it to the company. He read very well indeed, too. Then he gave out the parts, and rehearsals began. He was not a severe rehearser, as far as long hours went. We were usually "called" for eleven in the morning in the early days, but later, when Miss Rehan was not so strong, and had to be spared, we would often not begin until after one—after Mr. Daly's own lunch—and then things would drag on, rather. Often, of course, rehearsals would be called for the general company only, and then we principals would not have to go.

## The Stage Reminiscences of

Mr. Daly was very exacting in his training of the subordinates, and would not tolerate anyone standing about as if uninterested in the action of the piece. I have no wish to set myself up as a critic of his methods, but it sometimes seemed to me that he had even too much movement in some of his scenes. With us principals he rarely interfered seriously, letting us work out our own ideas of our parts, although everything had to pass his final approval before it could stand, and he would cut out our pet lines at the last moment if he saw fit. Then, too, he would have sudden inspirations. I remember once I had an entrance to make, and, just as I crossed the threshold, something pulled me back. Of course I threw up my hands

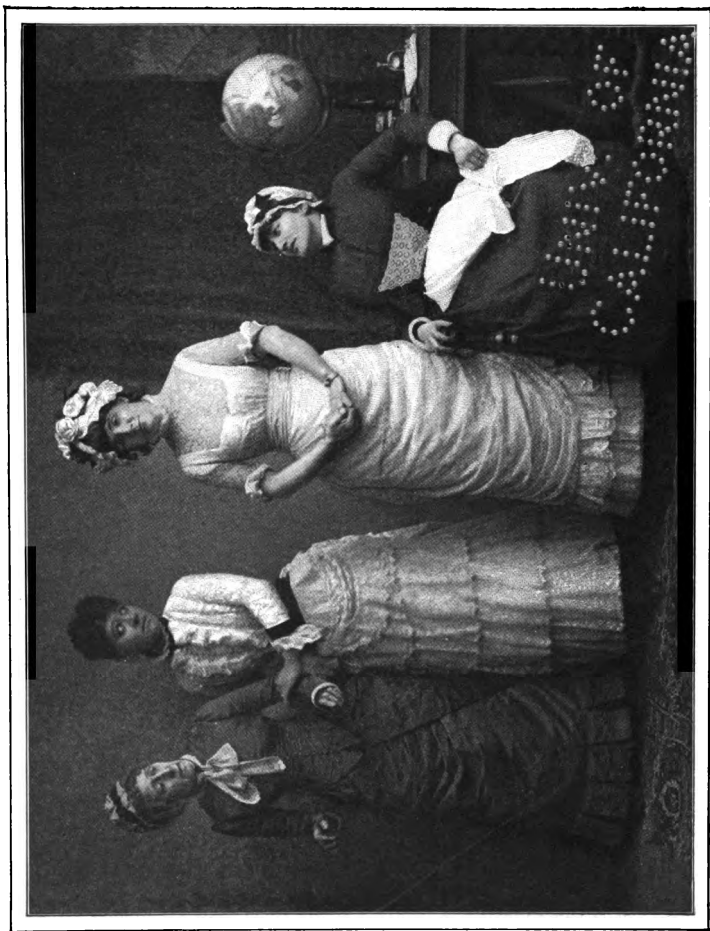
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and flung back my head, and the effect was comic, and, as it happened, in keeping with the part. When I turned round to see what had done it, there was the "Governor" holding on to my gown, and laughing. After that he gave orders that there should always be someone there to twitch me backward for that entrance, and he was often there to see that that order was properly carried out, too.

At rehearsal Mr. Daly's chair was placed at one side of the stage, its back to the house. There he would sit, when he was content to sit at all, and make suggestions and give directions. But more often he was in among us, telling us what to do, and showing us how to do it. Once, I remember, Miss Irwin, in the charac-

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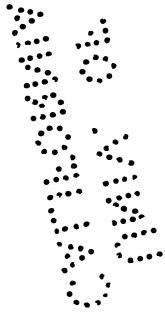
ter of an eavesdropping maid, had to lean against the corridor side of a door and then fall headlong into the room when the door was suddenly opened. She did it half heartily, for it is very difficult to make a spirited tumble just at rehearsal, and the "Governor" was on his feet in a moment, showing her how it should be done. "It must be like that," he said, picking himself up and dusting himself off. She looked him up and down—he was tall and slender, you know—and answered saucily: "I never could reach so far; I haven't the length, you know." "Then you must do it breadthwise," he retorted, and she had the good sense and the good fun to acknowledge that the joke was turned on her, for even then she was very stout.



*Mrs. Gilbert Miss Virginia Dreber Miss Ada Reban Miss May Irwin*

*“A Night Off”*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Evert Jansen Wendell, Esq.*



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Mr. Daly would permit no "gagging," and quite right too! But we who worked together all the time struck sparks out of one another, as it were. And inspirations would come in all sorts of odd ways. Still, I never would make a point, or say a thing, no matter how funny it might be, unless it was in keeping with the especial person I was doing, something she, not I, would say. Once, I know, in "A Woman's Won't," when we sat down to our table and began with our oyster-broth, real broth it was, and uncommonly good too, Mr. Lewis said, "Pass me the crackers." Now, there were no crackers as it happened, and we were at a loss for the moment. I could think of nothing better to say than the current slang of the day:



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“They’re in the soup.” It was funny, and I could see the “Governor” at his station in the wings, double up in his amusement. No crackers were allowed on the table after that, and I was always given a chance to get off my slang. Sometimes, though, Mr. Daly would tire of these interpolations, or would fancy that they lost their point and their freshness with too frequent repetition. Then he would stop them short.

Once towards the end, when we were rehearsing “Cyrano de Bergerac,” I unconsciously made a contribution to the “business.” It was in the scene where the two pages come in with *Cyrano* to serenade *Roxane*. I was standing by as the duenna. The music was very pretty and catchy.

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My feet always answered to the sound of music anyway and this time, having nothing in particular to do, I began to "step it out," and was having a great dance all to myself when I heard Miss Rehan whisper: "Governor, look at Grandma!" He looked and nodded. Of course the *Cyrano* (Mr. Richman) looked too, and that brought me back to my part as staid and proper as a duenna should be, making a pretty finish to the scene. Mr. Daly made us rehearse it thoroughly, and it became part of the performance. He used to say I need never be out of the cast, for I could always dance, even if I had no lines to say. Once he introduced a Sir Roger de Coverley, just to bring me on. It was then that I teased my friends, telling

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them that I had been promoted to the front row of the ballet, and must put all the photographs of my men friends out of my rooms when their wives called, so as not to compromise them.

Mr. Daly would work with the rest of us, and often more than the rest of us. I have seen him help shift a scene, and then come down to the front again with his hands dirty, and his face dirty too, sometimes, and go on with his work without a thought of himself. Then the day would come when his chair would disappear from its usual place, and we knew we were in for our hardest trial, for "the 'Governor' is out in front." The front of the house would be all dark, and we could never see him, but we could hear his voice—now from

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the orchestra chairs, now from the gallery—whenever anything did not go quite right. I never attempted to mark down any directions on my part until after Mr. Daly had seen a rehearsal “from the front.” For there is no question but that the “front of the house”—the audience, in other words—gets a point of view and a grasp of the stage picture that the actors, and even the stage manager himself, can never get from the other side of the footlights.

On the first night of every play, Mr. Daly always prompted the piece himself, standing by the prompter and holding the book. This led to an amusing incident one night. There was a line to be spoken off the stage, and knowing how important it was

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that it should be done just right, Mr. Daly determined to say it himself, but he miscalculated distances, or something of the kind, for when the line was due, he wasn't in the right place to say it. The prompter could do nothing, for Mr. Daly had the book, and we who were about dared not prompt him. Of course the line was given eventually, but it hung fire in a way that would have made trouble if anyone but the "Governor" had been responsible!

Even after the rehearsals and the first night were over, even when the play was before the public, Mr. Daly was always on the watch. If anything went wrong, and some of us said: "Thank fortune the 'Governor' didn't see that," there he was at one's

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elbow. But often at morning rehearsal he would make some comment or criticism on the performance of the night before that would mystify us all, for none of us had seen him anywhere. Finally, I asked him one day: "Look here, 'Governor,' where did you use to be, that you saw everything we did?"

"If you really want to know," he answered, "I was up on the paint-screen." There he had been perched up among the flies, on the great rack that the scene-painters use for their work, with his head over the edge, watching every action on his stage, night after night. Of course that was in his early days. Later, when he had his company thoroughly trained, and had made his reputation as a

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manager, Mr. Daly was content to watch from his box. And either he or Mrs. Daly was always there. She was a Miss Duff, daughter of the famous manager, and she knew the stage and stage life thoroughly, from Mr. Daly's own point of view. She was a good wife to him and a great helper in every way. She knew her husband's business thoroughly, and never told a word of it, and that is saying a great deal, for curious people would often ask her questions about affairs when they would not dare ask her husband. And she was always pleasant and merry with him and with everybody else. They say he used to come home at night and fling himself down on the sofa, wholly worn out with

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the day's hard work, and say : " Tell me a funny story, May, and take my mind off all this." And she always had the story ready.

A lovely trait of Mr. Daly's character was his tenderness and thought of children. I never knew him to pass a little newsboy on the street without buying a paper, and he always took the paper with a look in his eyes as much as to say : " We must help the boys to get a living." A beautiful trait, not giving as charity but buying what the boy had to sell.

People may say that Mr. Daly's place can be easily filled, that his influence will not last, and all that. But the longer we are without him, the more I seem to miss him. He was so watchful, so keen to see any falling



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off in one's rendering of a part, so quick to modify any little mannerism or foolish trick in a beginner's work ; to me there doesn't seem anyone left to say "*Don't!*"

I was fond of the "Governor" ; when I knew him first he was so brilliant, so versatile, so undaunted by failure. I watched him go through so much, saw him put heart and soul into everything he did, and often lose everything but his splendid courage. I saw him make mistakes and retrieve them, build up fortunes and spend them, and in those early days he never lost his wonderful resourcefulness. He changed afterward in many ways, and I dare say I changed too. Perhaps I am too jealous for the old company, but I cannot help feeling that

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all the comic-opera business of later years, with its crowd of pretty faces and young actresses "to be placed," was a step-down for Mr. Daly. Once, I remember, just at the last, there was a general "call" for the entire company. We none of us knew what it was for, but I never questioned a "call," and down I went. The stage was full; there were a few of our company there, but most of them were young people—chorus girls and the like. The "Governor" was busy sorting them and arranging things generally when he spied me, and crossed over to me.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. "There was a call for the entire company, and I suppose I still belong to it," I answered.

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“But I don’t want you,” he said. “I am only dividing these people up into the different companies for the light-opera stuff.” Then he looked all over the stage, and down at me with a little frown: “You don’t like all this, Grandma?”

“No, I don’t. Not on my own account at all, but this isn’t like you, a bit.” And it wasn’t.

For in its later days the company was so modified, and his own interests were so widespread, that the whole business did not seem so typically “Daly’s” as in its earlier days. Only Miss Rehan and I remained of the “Big Four.” Success had taken John Drew from us, and dear “Jimmie” Lewis, with all his lovable ailings and failings, had died.



*James Lewis*

*From a photograph by Sarony, New York. In the collection of Mrs. Gilbert 227*

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Then came Mr. Daly's death, in the summer of '99, a dreadful shock to us all, bringing with it, as it did, the breaking of all the old ties. He was a man of such vitality that death had seemed always a remote possibility only, and, in his many ventures, *that* was the only factor he left entirely out of the reckoning. So his affairs were left in a good deal of a tangle, and, for a time, we none of us knew what was going to happen. Then, for a time, too, we thought that the theatre was to be retained by the heirs and run on the old lines; and so, many members of the old company looked upon themselves as bound by their original contracts. But when the various interests were carefully reviewed, the risks involved proved

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to be too great, and it was decided to sell the theatre, and to settle as many of the out-lying ventures as possible, Miss Rehan retaining certain of the plays, and arranging for her own starring tour as soon as her health should permit.

By this time the summer was well forward and we were all scattered. I was staying with some friends in Siasconset, a little out-of-the-way town on the Island of Nantucket. It was there that the news came to me of the sale of Daly's Theatre, and a real shock it was! I suppose that that was taken by other managers to mean that Mr. Daly's old company was disbanded, for soon afterward I received a letter from Mr. Charles Frohman, about a part he thought

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would suit me in a new play he was putting on in the autumn. A certain sense of loyalty to Miss Rehan and to the old company—such as was left of it—held me back for a time ; but, as the days dragged on in that quiet island town, I began to get anxious about my own affairs, and finally wrote to Miss Rehan's business manager, asking him if I were to consider myself free to make engagements on my own account. Back came a telegram asking me not to do anything until I had received the letter that was to follow by the next post. I waited one mail, two or three mails, and nothing came. Then I wrote to Mr. Frohman. Several letters were exchanged, but letters are unsatisfactory things at best, and I



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arranged for a personal interview at eleven o'clock of a certain morning. For me it meant quite a little journey first, from Siasconset to Nantucket town, by the Central Railroad of Nantucket—about a yard long it is, for all its big name—then by boat to New Bedford and rail to Fall River, and finally by the Sound boat to New York.

The interview on the morning of my arrival settled all outstanding questions between Mr. Frohman and me in most pleasant fashion, and after a few hours of shopping I began my return journey by the same route at five o'clock of that afternoon, with my immediate future comfortably assured. The newspapers got hold of my flying business trip, and made a

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very pretty story out of it. The newspapers have always been good to me, their praise has been pleasant reading, and their little warnings have often helped me. Still my feeling has always been that an actor ought to come somewhere near his own ideal, satisfy his manager, and please his audience, before he gets eager to read what is printed about him.

In the early days I had no time to study newspaper criticisms, and my husband seldom told me about them. Perhaps he thought I might get spoiled, but it is more probable that he feared that I would become discouraged. He used to say: "Just go ahead and do your work as well as you can and don't worry about the

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critics." I remember as distinctly as if it were yesterday the first time my attention was drawn to a newspaper notice of my work. We were playing in the West under Lewis Baker's management ; the play was "Romeo and Juliet," the *Juliet* Avonia Jones, the *Romeo* her mother, I think, although of that I will not be positive. I was the nurse, my first attempt at the part, indeed, my first attempt at any such important part, and I was as nervous as a witch. I know that during the performance I was in the box that used to be built inside the proscenium arch so that the actors themselves could watch the stage during their waits, and get almost the same point of view as the audience. Mrs. Jones was there, too, and she

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gave me many a good bit of advice, among others that I should always, every night on returning from the theatre, carefully go over the *rôle* I had just done, before beginning any new work. Our lives were too busy to keep always to that rule, but the advice was good in itself. The morning after this performance, Louis Mestayer, who had been the *Mercurio*, was very happy over the capital notice the local paper had given him. That evening, I said to my husband: "Mestayer is very proud of the criticism of his work last night."

"It's not a bit better than the one you got," answered Mr. Gilbert, as quick as a flash. And he was the man who pretended to disregard the newspapers! Of late days my Eng-

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lish nephew has carefully gathered all the printed stuff he could find about me, and has carefully pasted it in a book. And now I go on collecting, more to please him than for anything else. By the way, there is one bit of criticism in my nephew's collection that is amusing, and worth quoting in the light of subsequent events. It is from the *Cleveland Daily Review*, and the date is June 29, 1857.

“Her peculiar forte, we think, is genteel comedy, though it is difficult to decide this question positively where she appears in such a variety of parts.”

The only time I resented newspaper chatter was when I had my spectacles stolen. They were snatched from my belt, the case I wore there

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being torn away. I spoke of it to Mr. Dorney, and the story went round the theatre. Somehow the reporters got hold of it, and they made a great to-do about it. It was really too bad of them! I felt it the more, because I had managed to keep a much more serious theft an absolute secret. That was at the time when so much fun was being made of the "robbery-of-jewels" form of theatrical advertisement. I had a very valuable pair of ear-rings taken from my pocket most cleverly. And I was on my way to play for a charity, too! However, I kept my loss quite to myself. And then to be brought before a sympathetic public as the loser of a pair of spectacles!

Stories and incidents come into my

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mind, now that I am in the way of thinking back, that I had forgotten for years. These things are little and unimportant enough in themselves, but when I sit thinking, as I do sometimes, they bring back my whole life. Did I ever tell you how I took in the "Governor" without knowing it? It was in the first Fifth Avenue Theatre days, and we were doing "Major Wellington de Boots." I had had a terribly sore toe, a matter of poultices and I don't know what all, but had managed to keep my misery pretty much to myself. I wore black satin gaiters, I know, and I cut a slit in the top of the foot part, putting something black under it. But of course I limped badly all through the piece. Years after-

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ward Mr. Daly revived this farce. When we were rehearsing, he began to fidget and worry.

“You’ve forgotten something of your part,” he told me.

“Why, no,” I said, “I think I have all the old business.”

“When you did it before, you had a perfect limp.”

“Limp? Limp?” Then I remembered: “That wasn’t a limp,” I laughed, “that was just a sore foot.”

“Never mind what it was, I want that limp!” And of course he got it.

Then, I remember, I broke “Jim-nie” Lewis all up one night in “7-20-8.” He never liked his own photographs, and there were one or



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two that he fairly hated, and we loved to tease him about them.

This night, in the last act, I was sitting at a desk with my back to the audience, writing something, and he was sitting facing me, and so of course facing the audience, too. He was all curled up and very meek and miserable, for I had caught him in his escapade. When I was supposed to be reading what I had written, I was really holding the photograph he hated most up under his nose! He curled up more miserably than ever to hide his twitching face.

Here is another scene that is still as fresh as ever before my eyes. Long ago, when we were coming home from the Pacific Coast, the company had its special car at the end of the

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train. Mr. Daly always insisted upon this; you see no one could make any excuse for going through our car then, and we had the rear platform as a sort of balcony. I had my own compartment, and had been sitting close to the window, watching the strange, barren country we were passing through. In a sort of cutting we slowed down, and finally stopped for a little. There were no trees, no grass even, and everything was stony and gritty. Nearly alongside of me was an incline, of perhaps some eight or ten feet, and at the top a cabin, not more than one room, I should think, but very bright and clean. The owner was sitting at his door in the miner's dress-up afternoon costume, a white shirt—really white—and blue

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overalls. Beside him was a granite slab, almost like a table, and on it, in an old battered tin can, the most superb bunch of wild flowers I ever saw, they were so brilliant and so well arranged. Near by was a dog asleep with his nose between his paws, so absolutely still that to this day I don't know whether he was alive or not. It made a picture of bright homelikeness that was good to see in the midst of those dreary plains. The ladies on the train began teasing for the flowers, beckoning and laughing, but the man shook his head. At last, just as the train was starting again, he spied me at my window. I smiled and nodded, and he smiled and nodded. Then I pointed to the house, to the dog and the flowers, and



*Mrs. Gilbert*

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smiled and nodded again, trying to express my pleasure in the whole picture. To my surprise, he grabbed up the flowers and plunged down to the train, just managing to reach the back platform. "Give them to the old lady," I heard him say, and he handed them to Mr. Dorney. I got to the back platform and waved my thanks before we were out of sight. The flowers were lovely, many of them highly colored relatives of our Eastern flowers, some of them absolute strangers to me. I kept them as long as I could, and used up all the books I had with me in pressing them. The younger members of the company used to tease me for outdoing them about the "man with the flowers," as they called him. I suppose my old

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face at the window had stood to hi  
for everything he had left in the Eas  
for his mother's face at her window  
for home, and all the old friends I  
ever had. I have never seen him  
since, of course, but I believe I should  
know him to-day.

Coming to greet my old New York  
public, under a different manage-  
ment, and with other than my old  
associates, has been like a new birth  
to me, and the reception that met me  
on my entrance in "Miss Hobbs"  
was a complete surprise. It was not  
the applause alone that prevented me  
beginning my lines that night; I had  
a good big lump in my throat. Then  
came my birthday. Not the eightieth,  
please, as they said; it was not quite

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long enough since 1821 for that. And besides, Mr. Daly gave me my seventieth birthday party at the Savoy Hotel, in London, in 1891. But I had thought that, with the leaving of the old life, I was leaving all those who remembered the old anniversaries. To be sure, Mr. Richman, who had been a member of our company, knew the date, but I never suspected him of "telling on me." Even when Miss Russell asked me to come to her after the performance that evening, I was simple enough to think it was to be only a little supper at her home. Instead came public speeches at the theatre, and the public presentation of the silver that, to me, stands for the personal affection of many dear friends, old and new. I have



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been trained to self-control all my life, else I really believe that the surprise and the warm-hearted kindness of it all would have upset me quite! That kindness seems to be about me all the time now. Miss Russell has made the Lyceum Theatre like home to me, and I am very happy.

One good friend of mine says that if she had such beautiful silver she should give up acting, and simply stay at home and have tea all the time. It sounds attractive, but if I did that, I should have serious doubts as to the supply of tea, to say nothing of the other necessaries of life.













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